

## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Acoustic Creatures**

### **Human and animal entanglements in performance**

McQuinn, Austin

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Acoustic Creatures: Human and animal entanglements in performance.

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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## Abstract

This thesis questions the phenomenon of human and animal acoustic entanglements in arts and performance practices and proposes that sounding the animal in performance, or 'becoming-resonant', secures vital connections to the creatural. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal, Donna Haraway's definitions of multi-species becoming-with and Mladen Dolar's ideas of voice-as-object frame this analysis and shape its findings. This thesis begins by tracing coevolutionary chronologies of listening to birdsong in the work of Olivier Messiaen and Celeste Boursier-Mougenot, alongside the development of musical instrumentation, broadcasting, and recording technologies. This trajectory continues in Chapter Two, through my reading of Daniela Cattivelli's sound works where entanglements of artist, activist, bird-hunter and animal challenge perceptions of birdsong and its meaning in human culture. The acoustics of hunting and its origins in palaeoperformance (Montelle) are connected here through animal voices to Rane Willerslev's contemporary anthropological investigations of Siberian hunting techniques where deception, concealment, animism and personhood form an acousmatic template. In Chapter Three, the concepts of tactical empathy, perspectivism and neoshamanism (Viveiros de Castro) inform my analysis of Marcus Coates' live art events where, I argue, he both botches Deleuzo-Guattarian theories of becoming-animal and complicates the influence of Joseph Beuys' animal mythologies. Myth also informs animal presences in opera, which in Chapter Four, I claim have been challenged in powerful ways by Raskatov's *A Dog's Heart* and Birtwhistle's *The Minotaur*. Raskatov breaks with the traditions of silent dog stereotypes on stage from Shakespeare to contemporary cabaret. Instead violence and ostracism find a voice through these persecuted creatures. Violated bodies and voices are crucial to the primate dramas of Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and Franz Kafka's *A Report to the Academy* where, in Chapter Five, I show how the politics of the tongue, language worship, and anthropocentrism overpower human-primate relationships and distort inter-species communication. Counter to the tyranny of human exceptionalism, the creatural acoustics at work in Kathryn Hunter's empathic becoming-ape, in bass John Tomlinson's minotaur, in the radical throat-singing of Christian Zehnder and in castrato histories and legacies, push materialities of lung, larynx and muscle into a new ecology of listening, singing and resonating. By invoking vocalic animal bodies and becoming entangled, creatural acoustics send sonic threads through the labyrinths of culture that sustain resonances across species and beyond the limitations of the human.

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## Introduction.

In this thesis I question the nature and function of animal acoustics in human arts and performance practices, where human and animal identities become entangled in the production of creatural vocal assemblages and becomings. What is the animal voice and body doing in performance? How have creatural acoustics influenced performance histories and legacies? Where are the entanglements of human and animal sound worlds to be found in performance historically and in contemporary practice? This thesis seeks to interrogate the acoustic, living relationships I perceive exist between nonhuman animal culture and human performance practices at the dawn of the Anthropocene. Animal acoustics have been largely treated as behavioural and limited in meaning and intentionality. As I will show, when the animal voice becomes resonant in creative human sound worlds, it is loaded with meaning. Just as the animal body has also proved immensely useful as a trope or symbol or vehicle of human desires, power struggles, subjectivity and more in an endless search for meaning, so too are animal acoustics in performance less to do with the lives of animals and almost exclusively and centrally concerned with human life.

Anthropocentric thinking has been challenged in recent years by what scholars refer to as ‘the animal turn’ in philosophy, in literature and critical theory and across disciplines such as archeology and performance studies. The problematizing of ethics through a counter-Cartesian rethinking of animal rights and animal studies late in the last century prompted a radical shifting of proximities between animal and human worlds. In confronting what is at stake ethically for the nonhuman living beings with whom we share an endangered globe,

the cultural, social and political hierarchies that have separated species for so long became unsettled as identity, otherness and difference required urgent reconsideration. While animal liberation may not be any closer to its ambitions since Peter Singer wrote its manifesto in the 1970s, human liberation from crushing anthropocentric isolationism has opened the gates of critical thinking to allow the human to become involved in the phenomenon of multispecies worldings - not least creatively and philosophically.

In a further renegotiation of the terms that may constitute our future relationships with animals in a post-anthropocentric zootopia, the ban on anthropomorphism has also been scrutinized for its separationist values and found to be lacking in empathy (de Waal, 2001). Where science and philosophy have been threatened with accusations of weak thinking if anthropomorphic methods are detected in research, the opposite has often been the case in creative disciplines and media. I argue that anthropomorphism has, in ways that are often questionable, maintained an animal presence or a consciousness of animality at base, in the human project that is profoundly urban, artificial and mechanocentric. In the trajectory of my thesis, anthropomorphism in arts and performance practices is not always a necessarily uncritical praxis. Where the animal other has been romanticized or made sublime, sentimentalized and even violated throughout creative practices, it has more recently become a counter-symbol of the oppressed (human) the endangered (human) world or the enslaved (human and animal) subject of capital neo-liberalism (Carrithers, Bracken, & Emery, 2011; Shukin, 2009, 2013). My purpose in this brief introductory survey of human-animal cultural relations is to bring into focus the constant presence of animality in the history of human ideas. In a time of great danger and endangerment, the 'animal turn' in philosophy and critical writing is urgent, crucial and necessary.

My questions on being, being with and becoming animal through sound are deepened by engagement with the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In the jointly-penned *A Thousand Plateaus*, first published in 1980, the writers encourage a severance with traditional ways of seeing the animal (in psychoanalysis) as always an individual metaphor. Instead they advocate a process of losing ourselves in a multiplicity of proximities to animal life, beginning with the swarms of molecular entities that freely cross species boundaries between our bodies and the interiors and exteriors of other living species. There is a kind of counter-individual consciousness of the collective or the multiple or the swarm. Becoming-animal is an openness to fluid sensations of being in the world, a rhizome which operates latterly and without hierarchical discrimination in omnidirectional modes of thinking and evolving - not just being and remembering. Performance events that are of interest to me reveal this rhizomatic progress of artists and performers as they reveal their own awareness that they are entering 'zones of proximity' as a means of realizing a performance that will really matter, that has real materiality and that is really alive.

The animals that fascinate Deleuze and Guattari are wild and move in packs or herds, and it is the mobile freedom of entering and leaving territories and natures that brings energy to the theory of becoming. Deterritorialization and reterritorialization in animal behaviour corresponds, for Deleuze and Guattari, with liberation in the words, signs, sounds and ideas in art, and in particular in the writing of Franz Kafka and in the music of Olivier Messiaen. Metamorphosis replaces metaphor in the becoming-animal of the artist. Artists stake out a territory of ideas, declare its limits, postures and boundaries but it is not a fixed world. Instead, art is a porous environment in a state of eternal becoming. Like the birds, horses, wolves and insects that populate this influential chapter in *A thousand plateaus*,



‘becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible’ is the method to break away from the normative and the static and begin a fierce relationship of rhizomatic entanglements with the living world.<sup>1</sup>

In the chapters that follow, I have taken up the challenge that Deleuze and Guattari proposed and I use their theory of becoming to lead the way into the labyrinthine structures I explore in this thesis. Becoming is a metaphysical experience and a process of passaging through territories and zones of proximity, where entities, molecules and ideas affect each other without exhausting their core identities. It is a place of uncertainties and unknown relations, of indeterminate territories at the edge of the human and the nonhuman, where creative processes generate metamorphosis. Becoming-animal blurs the distinction between human and animal for Deleuze and Guattari, where ‘each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities.’<sup>2</sup> The performances that I evoke in this thesis are, for me, intensities of becoming where it is the close proximity and coming together of bodies, sounds and ideas in a fluid entanglement which generates affects in the spectatorial and vocalic body.

In my definition, entanglements are not static confusions of thought but oily sets of relations moving around and over each other in symbio-poetic intra-action. The human mind and body is itself an entangled ‘thing’ - a composite of biochemical reactions, multiplying blood cells, nerves, skin, bone, air and water that depends on other complex systems for its existence. In what Donna Haraway calls ‘a multi-species becoming-with’ we are always non-neutrally entangled with other bodies, animals, bacteria, microbes,

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<sup>1</sup> Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2004), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Continuum;

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1986), *Kafka: toward a minor literature*, University of Minnesota Press; Minneapolis. p22.

cosmologies. She foregrounds Lynn Margulis' term 'symbiogenesis' to illustrate her own ideas of entanglement where identity, which must be cherished, is always in a relational web of 'non-Euclidean past, presents and futures.'<sup>3</sup> The human body is itself an ecosystem in complex, continuous relationships with other microbial worlds. Deleuze and Guattari write; 'We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it... We become universes. Becoming animal, plant, molecular, becoming zero.'<sup>4</sup> In short, to be alive is to become. In the performance entanglements I analyze throughout this thesis, I try to unravel the constituent particles of their webbed construction without pulling the tangle apart completely. It is the entanglement that produces the ideas and one element cannot be described without considering what influences it or how it affects others. For me, Becoming and Becoming-animal in art and in performance establishes a vital connection to the living mind and body of both the human and nonhuman animal in ways that differ from our relationship with inanimate objects. My specialization is to focus on the acoustic entanglements of creatureliness – what does becoming-animal sound like?

When human and animal voices become entangled in performance what is at stake? When the animal voice and body are used as tools to describe difference and otherness, both magical and dreadful, I ask how are these actions relating to ongoing scholarship into animal acoustics in the arenas of bioscience, technoscience and cultural anthropology? Are creative actions involving the animal and its voices obligated to refer to contemporary scientific discoveries in the realms of say, insect communication intelligence, primate social grammar or aquatic sonar worlds? Or is the archive of animal tropes, both vocal and silent, all we need to re-tell and re-perform mirrors and illuminations of human experience?

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<sup>3</sup> Haraway, D.J. 2008, *When species meet*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis. p32

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1994, *What is philosophy?* Verso, London. p169.

My thesis asserts its own position within a broad territory of ideas where human listening and sounding, hearing and speaking, silence and song are part of a cross-species, zoo-acoustic experience of the world. The intention of this project is not to flatten species difference or diminish the human linguistic achievement. On the contrary, as David B. Dillard-Wright reminds us, all communication and acoustic life is gestural, ambivalent, mobile, extra-human, social, vital and above all performative. Dillard-Wright's phenomenological method of placing human communication in a less self-contained extra-human world is his way of 'thinking across species boundaries.'<sup>5</sup> The thesis is therefore a process of both thinking and writing 'across species boundaries' and also across the boundaries of disciplines as I bring together a selection of material from arts (Aloi, 2007; Baker, 2000; Lippit, 2000) and performance practices (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Parker-Starbuck, 2011; Ridout, 2006) as well as ideas and influences from animal studies (Fudge, 2011; McHugh, 2013) zooarchaeology (Overton and Hamilakis, 2013) social and cultural anthropology (Ingold, 2012; Marvin, 2000; Vivieros de Castro, 2008; Willerslev, 2007) and philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004; Dolar, 2006; Haraway, 2008) . In a further stretch across boundaries, I bring my own deep interest in the operatic voice into the field of creaturely acoustics. In my practice as a visual artist I have created entanglements of human, animal and opera in installations and performances where hierarchies of culture were troubled by otherness, detritus and singing. In Performance Studies, opera has remained largely outside the field despite the many common qualities, which I think are central to both disciplines. Both could be considered young fields, both can interrogate institutional, academic and traditional assumptions about their parent disciplines. For me it is the primacy of the voice in opera, its liveness, and its degrees of entanglement with

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<sup>5</sup> Dillard-Wright, David B. (2009) 'Thinking across species boundaries: General Sociality and embodied meaning', *Society and Animals* 17 (2009) 53-71, Leiden: Brill

cultural pasts and future that holds my attention. Recent scholarship, which addresses the possibilities of thinking about opera through Performance Studies (Duncan, 2004), has substantially contributed to my project. In my pursuit of resonances that reverberate throughout human and animal entanglements in performance, the operatic voice comes to the fore. Listening, responding, reacting, botching and resonating across species boundaries are the trans-territorial, trans-disciplinary acoustic actions that will dictate the conclusions of this thesis. Informed originally by my own live art performance practice, my interest in opera and its contradictions, recent debates in animal studies, social anthropology and philosophy have all provided the impetus to develop the ideas and conclusions of my thesis – that humans and animals are entangled in acoustic resonances across species boundaries and throughout performance practices.

In Chapter One I will trace a development of technologies of recording and transmitting birdsong through a series of performances over the last century which, I argue, has produced a cultural history of listening to animals and performing animal voices that runs parallel with the history of musical technologies. The artists work that frames the chronologies of techno-acoustic innovation in this chapter extend the limits of the technologies of their time (Beatrice Harrison and radio, Olivier Messiaen and cassette tapes, Jonathan Harvey and synthesizers) and they are also engaging with a desire for timelessness; by listening to animal voices and adopting them (Bartok, Rautavaara); by revealing their positions, captive and wild, in our contemporary world (Boursier-Mougenot); where each performance creates its own ventriloquisms of voice and places the bird at the centre of this newly claimed territory. With a special focus on Messiaen's bird compositions I analyze of the qualities of these actions of listening between species, in

gaps and chasms of being and becoming audible, where a keen disposition and intensity of auditory rigour produces avant-garde performances of acoustic daring.

The acousmatics of animal voices - the voice we can hear without seeing or even knowing its origin (Schaeffer, 1966) are the subject of Chapter Two where I analyze the historical and the contemporary use of animal acoustics and acousmatics in both hunting and art practices, how they have co-evolved and co-exist alongside each other and, I will argue, how they remain connected within the staging of the artist-becoming-animal. In the example of Daniella Cattivelli's recent sound actions and compositions, I propose that her investigations of birdsong and its impersonation by Italian hunters, *Il Chioccolatori* provide a point of departure into some unsettling and often beautiful sound actions that in turn redefine terms like capture, territorialization and release as they relate to bird sounds in/of bird bodies. In her techno-vocal soundscapes some of the dangerous inheritance of hunting lingers where she cajoles her audience into complicated thinking about how we use animal voices (and then bodies) for both entertainment and entrapment.

In Chapter Three, I will interrogate core elements of human-animal encountering in the work of Marcus Coates and make connections with the tactical empathic techniques of the hunter/performer alongside those of the shaman in Northern circumpolar communities and the aesthetic and performative legacies of these practices; with concepts of shamanism, schizophrenia and becoming-animal in Deleuzeo-Guattarian explorations of personhood; and explorations of the multiplicities of selfhood, personhood, mimesis and magical alterity in the work of Coates and other artists who are deeply invested in performance actions which engage with the material values of creatural acoustics.

Animal becomings are tested in the theatrical contexts of stage and laboratory and in the mergers between science and art in Alexander Raskatov's (2010) opera *A Dog's Heart*. The opera multiplies the themes of the stray dog and the sacrificial lab animal, eugenics, Bolshevism and bio-politics in an extravagance of musical anarchy. In Chapter Four, I suggest that the dog figure in this opera breaks with the history of the onstage canine, which traditionally has promised stereotypical silent obedience. This profane, scandalous creature is a vocal revelation as he goes through surgical procedures that transform him from dog to man and back to dog, violating every speech-act promise along the way. While the problematized ethics of both the laboratory and the onstage animal are exposed in plain-speaking ways in both Bulgakov's novel (1924) which inspired the opera, and in the staging of the work by ENO in London's Coliseum, the voice of the animal is most scandalizing in his expressions of his indifference to what is happening to him. I claim that Raskatov's opera is ultimately declaring with characteristic irreverence, as the medium has regularly done from the outset, that there is no hierarchy in speech, that the phenomenon of the voice emanating from the body can override or even dissolve the meaning of the words that are being sung and that this crying out is both angelic and animal at the same time. In the acoustic exclamation of the operatic dog, the vocalized carnal interior becomes exterior and exposes its vulnerability in what Walter Benjamin calls the 'creaturely' voice, which emerges 'from the mysterious interior of the organic' and which he maintains is the foundation structure of the genre, the opera.<sup>6</sup>

Hierarchies of vocalization in human-simian cultural co-evolution inform the work of Eugene O'Neill and Franz Kafka created in the post-Darwinian period of the early twentieth century. In Chapter Five, the 'primate dramas' (Rundle, 2008) that I will focus

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<sup>6</sup> In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin (Trans John Osbourne. Verso: New York, p211)

on produce triadic tropes of humans, apes and cages in which many shared biological similarities of species, interior and exterior and the muscles of communication, the larynx, the lungs and the tongue become organs of special meaning for human consciousness and culture. For example, through Colin Teevan's (2009) theatrical adaptation of Franz Kafka's (1917) short story *A Report to an Academy* I consider Kafka's own unflinching questions of animal muteness as confinement and human speech as freedom. The play, *Kafka's Monkey*, and Kathryn Hunter's solo performance of the work expose, on the surface, a familiar human fascination with this specific animal. Red Peter is a the captured Great ape who learns to speak in order to escape the caged torture in which he finds himself, only to step into the world of human speech and reason, which he sees as another version of imprisonment. It is the ape's refusal to accept the accolade of achievement the Academy wishes to bestow on him that lies at the painful centre of Red Peter's situation. Red Peter's ultimate tragedy is now that he has learned to become human, he can never return to being an animal.

In Chapter Six, I find acoustic routes - corporeal, instrumental, architectural - that tunnel my exploration of resonance and becoming, deeper inside the human-animal acoustic exchanges that shape this concluding chapter. In Harrsion Birtwhistle's opera *The Minotaur* (2009) the psychodrama of the caged man-beast I consider how the labyrinth becomes the chamber for re-sounding the rehearsed human-animal voices. Inside this structure the rules of language do not apply and so the trio of monsters in the opera – human buzzard, male priestess, and bull-man – find their voices and devour the air of the opera house. The labyrinth becomes a macrocosm of the human/animal interior of both the heart and the ear. In the voice of bass singer John Tomlinson's portrayal of the minotaur, the edifice of language comes crashing down to a zero point of meaning and base of

phonology in the screaming and babbling of the chorus and the resounding bawl of the bull. As Tomlinson's bull-man monster lies dying he groans the last line of the opera, 'Between man and beast, next - to - nothing.'<sup>7</sup> His dying wish is that there is *almost* nothing separating the species. In a concluding network of resonant becomings that come together in this performance, such as the willing spectatorial body, the acoustic architectural body of the opera house, the bodies of musical instruments, and the vocalic bodies of the singers, the human-animal acoustic entanglements re-sound their materiality of lungs, muscles and larynx in an ecology of singing and listening and becoming.

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<sup>7</sup> David Harsent, (2008), *The Minotaur*, Libretto. London: Boosey & Hawkes. p65.



## Chapter One.

### Becoming Audible: Listening in between species.

*Birds are psychopomps.*

Mircea Eliade

In the stage directions for the last scene of Terry Johnson's play *Cries from the Mammal House* (1993) 'all the characters gather around a crate that David opens: from the crate there issues an absurd cry which echoes around the mammal house.'<sup>8</sup> Earlier, the character of David has told the other members of his family who have inherited this small zoo, of the arrival of the crate and its contents:

It was a Dodo. It looked at me, I swear to God, and it opened its beak and it made the daftest sound I've ever heard.<sup>9</sup>

In Johnson's denouement of *Cries*, the Dodo is both the last straw and last hope for this dysfunctional family that is falling apart and about to become, in a way, extinct. The cry from inside the crate is metaphoric, imaginary and like no animal sound that exists - it is an absurdity - but its echo around the other animal houses is the inspired turning point of the story, not only for the family but also for the animals and the zoo in general. For Una Chaudhuri the play's ending reveals its 'dodo *ex machina*', in her (and the play's) argument for the 'reintegration of the animal into modern

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<sup>8</sup> Terry Johnson (1993), *Cries from the Mammal House*, *Plays, Selections*, London: Methuen. p116

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Johnson, p116

consciousness' before it's too late.<sup>10</sup> The *Mammal House* is bankrupt and rapidly losing its animals. David is dispatched to Mauritius in search of some new specimens. He returns with an animal agent that is going to save this family's dying world. By placing the Dodo (which we never see) inside the crate, Johnson places our strange and complex relationship with animals at the centre of his dramaturgical mirror box. The animal that was hunted to extinction is the one that could save us or at least for a while, our moral conscience. David has not only found a new/old species but more than that, a sound that we understood was lost forever. We can look at the actual taxidermied Dodo in the Natural History Museum, and at some level it remains a (tragic, mythologized, overly-trope) dried object. The idea that it could be alive and squawking in a crate on stage in the centre of London is a thrilling example of what can be imagined and produced in a performance context. Performing the sound of the extinct Dodo on stage is only tangentially related to ongoing ecological efforts in the face of ornithological endangerments. What is more in danger for David and his family is their ability to listen to each other and to salvage what is left of their human tribe within the larger zoological community in which they live and are at pains to sustain. What is so intriguing about Terry Johnson's engagement with the animals he puts to work in his play is that their concerns are our concerns and their absurdities are our absurdities.

In this ecological parable the voice of the bird is coming from a box - a disembodied voice woven into manifestations of our human cultural anxieties. The voices of the birds I bring together in this chapter are accessible to us because we hear them more

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<sup>10</sup> Una Chaudhuri (2005) 'Animal Geographies: *Zooësis* and the Space of Modern Drama' in *Performing Nature: Explorations in Ecology and the Arts*, eds. Giannachi, G and Stewart, N. Bern: Peter Lang. p116

than we see them and therefore we can 'consume' their tonality, spatiality and aesthetics without experiencing their corporeality. Beginning with the radio broadcast of a nightingale in 1924, I will trace a development of technologies of recording and transmitting birdsong through the last century which I argue has produced a kind of ventriloquism - a dislocated, omnidirectional sound coming from a box (or computer, cd player, radio or cage or stage). As Alice Goldfarb Marquis said of the nightingale on the radio, 'sound - any sound emerging from a box seemed like a miracle.'<sup>11</sup> Birds are uniquely ventriloquistic in this way; as familiar, everyday vocalizing presences, birds enchant us with their vocal presences and they charm us with their eternal twittering to which we can attach any number of meanings and interpretations. Modern acoustic technologies have been expertly engaged in reproducing the imagined body through resonances and multiplications of various disembodied voices in countless performance contexts. Steven Connor suggests that this 'ventriloqual' body 'is not located so much as distributed in space.'<sup>12</sup> The vocal distribution of the bird body through technology raises the stakes from visual dependency to aural liberation. The world for Connor is 'apprehended primarily through hearing, or in which hearing predominates', and is 'much more dynamic, intermittent, complex, and indeterminate' than the visual world.<sup>13</sup> The indeterminacy is the crucial factor in our eternal attraction to birds and their soundings, where their sound begins and ends, or where precisely it is coming from or what it looks like. Acoustic detachments from the corporeal are loaded with archaic resonances - warnings, exhortations, instructions, celebrations, awakenings and premonitions -

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<sup>11</sup> Alice Goldfarb Marquis, (1984): Written on the Wind: The Impact of Radio during the 1930s. *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Jul., 1984), p410

<sup>12</sup> Steven Connor (2000) *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p13

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Connor, p18

evoking a world of non-temporal powers and presences, a world in-between materiality and ephemerality. A voice without a visible source can be the voice of powers above and beyond the visible, where using the device of hiding the sources of sound on stage, like Johnson's Dodo, produces affects across stages and auditoriums are the stock and trade of the enchantment of the disembodied.

Animal sounds have long been entangled within the major acoustics of the stage, in musical instrumentation, in recordings of birdsong and in the voice of the singer. In what follows I argue that animal sounds impact upon us as potential voices and if we use them for that purpose, then they raise for us the possibility of containing meaning or at base, our concept of meaning. What may be more significant is that we, as humans, are listening to sounds of other species that are not intended for our understanding and have found multiple methods of incorporating their voices into our acoustic imagination.

The history of listening to animals and then performing animal voices runs parallel with the history of musical technologies. Through listening and learning we have produced music through material objects and instruments, moving sound from the voice in the body to extending the voice and breath outward through simple instruments that imitate bird song. Beginning with the Neanderthal flutes made from vulture bone that produced a tone scale almost note-perfect to a contemporary piccolo, we have developed instruments of increasing complexity of fingering, stringing, bowing, plucking and now synthesized, digitized musical sound technologies that continue to demand an acuteness of listening. In *Listening and Voice* (2007), Don Ihde calls this trajectory 'a phenomenology of instrumentation' where

through millennia the body holds its moment in time through listening and playing music. The history of instrumental innovation is also the history of technology and the history of listening and responding to our sonic environment. None of these histories are fixed; all are changing and continue to change. As Ihde states, 'all technologies are non-neutrally transformational, including musical ones.'<sup>14</sup> Just as the nature and styles of performance change and continue to change and develop, the recording of this activity runs along side and keeps up with the changes. The nature of recording is not neutral - the hundreds of hours in editing suites spent listening, tuning, enriching, accentuating, achieving intimacy - this is a subjective, creative practice. The sound engineers and artists working at this intensity of listening are attuned to sound and 'noise' at a highly sensitive level, breaking down sound into images, parts, files and bits, and then reassembling and reconstructing them into new creative sound worlds. Within the continuum of performance, recording technologies become fluid agents of the acoustic world always ready to be manipulated, re-invented, re-cycled and transformed. When we explore the possibilities of combining animal communication and technology as a product of the phenomenon of listening, Ihde suggests that, 'we are leaving the sense of metaphor and entering the neighborhood of voice at its centre.'<sup>15</sup> The artists who frame what follows are specifically listening to birdsong, and through their interpretation and manipulation of avian acoustics and technologies they create new neighbourhoods of voice by placing the bird at the centre of these newly claimed territories.

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<sup>14</sup> Don Ihde (2007), *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, New York: State University of New York Press. p256

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Ihde, 192

### **Nightingales, Cellos and Bombers.**

On the night of 19 May 1942, a BBC Radio live broadcast crew was camped in a garden in Surrey, England to record and transmit the sound of nightingales singing. However, the broadcast was complicated by a low rising hum coming from the sky. It slowly became clear that the noise was coming from a fleet of aircraft bombers en route to Germany.<sup>16</sup> The sound engineers stopped the live broadcast for fear of security risks, but the recording survives. Listening to the eight-minute recording now, in which the slow movement from the sounds of nature and nostalgia is overtaken by the ominous acoustic of impending war and loss, is listening to a culture in transition. This pivotal moment of auditory experience signaled the end of one era and the birth of a new post-war world. The nightingale in the transmissions from bucolic Surrey, which had become a radio tradition, was being drowned out by the air-borne sound that was to define the second world war period in Britain, the bomber plane whose approaching hum heralded a changing cultural, and sonic, world.

By cutting short the transmission, not even the BBC could be relied upon to uphold tradition for its listening audience. Instead the audience heard this relatively new medium submit to the inevitable changes. Radio was still in its infancy and while it was breaking down many social barriers, it was still in the process of defining who or what it was for. Marquis calls these first years of radio 'the Era of Wonderment', when

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<sup>16</sup> According to Middlebrook and Everett in "The Bomber Command War Diaries" (1985: Viking) p.267 On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1942, "197 aircraft – 105 Wellingtons, 31 Stirling's, 29 Halifax is, 15 Hampdens, 13 Lancasters, 4 Manchesters. 11 aircraft- 4 Halifaxes, 4 Stirlings, 3 Wellingtons – lost. 155 aircraft reported hitting Mannerheim but most of their bombing photographs showed forest or open country. When the raid did begin, bombs approximately equivalent to no more than 10 aircraft loads fell in the city. Concentrated group of about 600 incendiaries in the harbour area on the Rhine burnt out 4 small industrial concerns-a blanket factory, mineral-water factory, chemical wholesalers and a timber merchants. Only light damage was caused elsewhere in the city. The only fatal casualties were 2 firemen."

listening to the myriad of live sounds 'emerging from a box' was still a strange and thrilling novelty.<sup>17</sup> In spite of the stringent principles of a board of directors led by John C.W. Reith who firmly maintained that what the nation should be listening to was aligned with contemporary concepts of righteousness, propriety and good taste, it soon became the commercialization of programming that was to influence a broadening cultural range of transmissions. The demand for filling airtime dictated an ever-widening spectrum of material. Marquis comments that 'no medium of enlightenment, information or entertainment had ever gobbled up material so speedily.'<sup>18</sup> This was an audience becoming accustomed to hearing and now experiencing their world newly performed on radio, with the air of authority that claimed reliability and some decidedly patriotic truthfulness. In the approach to the war the radio quickly became a source of unification of a country, defending as much of the old order as it could. The annual nightingale broadcast became an object of nostalgia of an acoustic present and soon-to-be past. Now, through technology, we can 'listen back' and identify this recording as a repository on the threshold of cultural change where the animal voice, one individual voice, can perform and re-perform pivotal actions by being an agent of memory. The individual animal voice here sings of its own culture, its own avian drama, oblivious to the human drama unfolding around it, and indifferent to the significance of its position in the recorded aural/aerial history of human socio-cultural events. The nightingale is more than likely listening for another nightingale. The audience is involved in an entirely other kind of listening – for nostalgia, for sentiment, for a position in time, in land and in newly shared acoustic space.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Marquis, p410

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Marquis., p 412

There are demands on the animal voice at work in this recording which I wish to unpack momentarily, but it is important to expand a little further on the notion of 'listening back' as I am listening now to recording of the nightingale in the garden and the hum of the bomber planes in the full knowledge of what was to follow after that night in 1942 – the fateful war, the invasions, and the millions of lives lost. The audience of the time had little recourse to controlling their acoustic world. Indeed the new medium of radio was very much a real time experience where transmission of sound in real time across all social barriers was somewhat revolutionary. Marquis elaborates on how radio programmers were stretched to capacity to what they felt was filling volumes of air-time with ambient atmospherics that might plug the gaps between important news bulletins, an activity that could not possibly be imagined today. As an example she describes the following event;

For the funeral of George V in January 1936, the coverage was by pure sound, uninterrupted by commentators. Listeners heard the rhythmic steps of the navy ratings pulling the gun carriage on which the king's coffin rested, the solemn commands of officers and the muffled gun salutes as the king was laid to rest. On the evening before the king died, the BBC maintained total silence, except for the sound of a clock ticking and every quarter of an hour the dignified words of chief announcer Stuart Hibberd: 'The king's life is moving peacefully toward its close'.<sup>19</sup>

What was at stake, precisely in the recording of the nightingale in 1942? There is the circumstance and history of the live broadcast itself. The radio crew was not

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Marquis. p400



randomly encamped in this county garden. It was the home of Beatrice Harrison (1892-1965), a British cellist who was the leading artist of the instrument in her time. She gave debut performances of many important compositions such as Delius' *Cello Sonata* (Wigmore Hall, 1918) and in 1920 Beatrice and her sister May Harrison delivered the first performance of Delius' *Double Concerto*, which was dedicated to the memory of all artists who had been killed in the First World War. Harrison also debuted Edward Elgar's *Cello Concerto* and was the soloist chosen to make the first HMV gramophone recording of the same work with Elgar himself conducting.

Alongside this repertoire for which she became well known to a listening radio audience of the period, Harrison developed a routine of practicing outdoors in her country garden in Oxted, Surrey. Nightingales were, and still are, regular migrating visitors to the region and during Harrison's rehearsals, the birds sang as she played.<sup>20</sup> On the nineteenth of May 1924, the BBC radio transmitted one of the first live outside broadcasts from the garden, featuring Harrison performing the folk song *The Londonderry Air* and *Chant Hindu* by Rimsky-Korsakov. The event was subsequently recorded on vinyl records. But it was the live broadcast that was to become so extremely popular (she received fifty thousand fan letters), so much so that the BBC returned to the garden for the next twelve years to repeat the performance, with and without Harrison. Even after she moved house in 1936, the broadcasts continued each May, right up until the last broadcast in 1942 and the arrival of the bombers. The popularity of the broadcasts is loaded with romantic rhetoric, most significantly that

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<sup>20</sup> However the Nightingale population has declined by 53% between 1995 and 2008 (Breeding Bird Survey Data) and the drastic emerging picture from Bird Atlas 2007-11 indicates that their range is continuing to contract towards the extreme south-east of England, despite massive, local conservation efforts in traditional coppice and scrub habitats. Source : [www.bto.org/support-us/current-appeals/nightingale-appeal](http://www.bto.org/support-us/current-appeals/nightingale-appeal)

the cellist and the birds were ‘dueting’. The standard versions of the story describe Harrison performing, the bird listening and then joining in and echoing the tune. Analyzing the recordings now with less romance and more information it is clear that the bird is not responding to *Chant Hindu* but most likely trying to vocalize above the drone of the invading instrument. Brumm and Todt’s (2002) study of territorial songbirds, especially nightingales, has shown that amplitude and pitch behaviour is in fact ‘noise-dependent.’<sup>21</sup> Studying captive birds in increasingly noisy urban environments, it is not surprising to find that they sing more loudly. But it is the changes in song structure in relation to competing noise that is more relevant. Nightingales have one of the broadest and most complex repertoires of signals or ‘songs’ of migrating avifaunae. In studies of signaling patterns counteracting noisy environments songs change significantly to shortening of song phrases to two rather than three syllable phrases, and to repeating the phrase for longer before moving on to the next song (Brumm and Slater, 2006: Brumm and Todt, 2006). Shorter signals and narrower frequencies in songbirds with large repertoires also occur in non-urban environments such as proximity to waterfalls and high-winded forests (Martens and Geduldig, 1990). Therefore, if a nightingale ever ‘sang in Berkley Square’ it was more likely remembered because of its pitch and repetition of short phrases in competition with its environment than for the complex variety of its vocal repertoire.<sup>22</sup>

What is important for the songbird is not so much its rich repertoire, though of course this plays a part in seasonal mating processes, but more so that it gets its messages through to its ‘audience’. Who is listening and what challenges are facing

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<sup>21</sup> Brumm, H and Todt, D., (2002) Noise dependent song and amplitude regulation in territorial songbirds. *Animal Behaviour*, 63, p891-897

<sup>22</sup> ‘A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square’ is a romantic British popular song written in 1939 with lyrics by Eric Maschwitz and music by Manning Sherwin.

them in this multi-lingual psychoacoustic drama of perception, selection, creativity and evolutionary urgency? How does the receiver extract the information it needs to either survive (alarm calls) or to find a mate (individual repertoires)? The noisier the environment, the shorter and more repetitious the phrases become and the higher the chances the signaler has of getting its messages across. Similarly, with the Harrison recordings and broadcasts, I raise the question, what message is being listened to and what is being heard? Judging by the popularity of the broadcasts of the nightingale recordings in the 1920s and 1930s, the audience of that time heard a timeless, bucolic evocation of their country, of a territory as reliable and consistent as the land itself. The post First World War environment was a period of re-establishing constants, an in-between time of flourishing industry and progressive cultural statements. A profoundly nostalgic sentiment also prevails and indeed, supersedes any of the ornitho-musicological likelihoods at work in the Surrey garden. The exquisite songbird combined with the beautiful, young, aristocratic cellist playing classical British compositions combined with the grainy crackle of early radio technology delivers a uniquely poignant 'signal' to the listening audience in its own time. In Aniruddh Patel's (2006) neuroscientific studies of the nationalistic relationships between speech and song, Patel argues that Western classical music created in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries directly relates not only to the socio-political ambitions of the period but more directly to the identifying speech cadences of populations.<sup>23</sup> Patel and his colleagues identified speech rhythms through radio recordings of the voice of the time and made correspondences with popular classical compositions and patterns of spoken language, rhythms and inflections that

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<sup>23</sup> Patel, A.D., Iversen, J.R., & Rosenberg, J.C. (2006). Comparing the rhythm and melody of speech and music: The case of British English and French. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 119:3034-3047.

characterize a 'national voice' or what Phillip Ball (2005) calls the 'concerto for the mother tongue'<sup>24</sup>. In this clustering of air-borne messages it is the illusion that becomes iconic, both then and now; a call and response 'duet' of the artist who articulates the most 'English' of notated musical voices on the cello with the romantically acoustic expositor of the English countryside in a performance that both engages and transcends physical time.

But what of the listening bird? Ornithologists would certainly ascribe some extraordinary abilities in birds to tease apart qualities in song that they may find either most attractive for selection or most essential for survival.<sup>25</sup> The second critical factor is the significance of location, of territory and accuracy of territorial description. Among these elements are sets of 'universals' for songbirds - pitch, tone, size, repertoire, frequency, timbre and so on - the musical structures that form the grid on to which individual embellishments and variations can be attached. These terms are of course, human or anthropological in origin; the terms and definitions used in studies of birdsong are always informed and directed by structures that define human musicology. The listener here is the ornithologist or naturalist who has been categorizing bird sounds and songs according to human musical notation systems since the early-modern period of evolutionary science (Witchell, 1896). While the study of birdsong has been a consistent source of valuable information for scientists on many subjects including sound production, sound waves, communication behavior and learning, the focus has shifted relatively recently from analysis of vocal complexity towards *how* birds learn and the implications this may have for

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<sup>24</sup> Phillip Ball, (2005), Concerto for the Mother tongue, *New Scientist*, Vol 187, Issue 2507

<sup>25</sup> For example penguin chicks identifying their parents call from among the thousands of calling penguins on the shore (Aubin and Jouventin, 1998).

neurobiological and neurobehavioural research, both avian and human. For example the recent discoveries and debates on the subject of mirror neurons (in birds, primates and humans) are proposed to be responsible for imitation in early learning<sup>26</sup>. Cecilia Heyes has argued that mirror neurons are more a product of social interaction than a neurobiological 'given', something that one is born with, which takes the study right into the heart of the nature/nurture, imitation/culture question (Hayes, 2009). Either way the most remarkable phenomenon about mirror neurons is the way in which they fire not only when one performs an action oneself, like picking up an object, but also when one observes another performing the same action. Heyes describes the event like the bridging of a gap between one agent and another, where actions are being performed and understood in very significant, highly sensory ways. Up until recently most research into the phenomenon of mirror neurons has been understood to be visually based – hence the term, mirror. However, as studies of bird neurobiology have established that birds need to be able to *listen* in order to achieve full vocal maturity and that this 'auditory feedback' is not only essential to acquire, maintain and develop songs, some more controversial hypotheses have emerged on the subjects of imitation, language acquisition and theory of mind in birds and other vocally-*minded* species (Thorpe, 1954; Nordeen & Nordeen, 1994). While the field has weaknesses because of lack of evidence, the appeal of what may yet be discovered will encourage further neurological study of mirror neurons and animal vocalization behavior (Dinstein, Thomas, Behrmann & Heeger, 2008). But what can emerge from these definitions of birdsong and progressions into understanding how we listen to animals and what we are listening 'for'? My assertion, using the Harrison/Nightingale

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<sup>26</sup> Ramachandran, V.S. (2000). "Mirror neurons and imitation learning as the driving force behind "the great leap forward" in human evolution". Edge Foundation web site. Retrieved October 19, 2011.

example is that the nature of listening changes according to the circumstances and needs of an audience, which may seem obvious except for one detail. When it comes to the animal voice that is being heard, in this case, the songbird, what I wish to hear is something timeless and universal, whereas in fact I am hearing a sound that is constantly changing and evolving alongside our own human cultural voices. This, I suggest, is what makes complex the processes of creating art using birdsong and of what we are listening to in the extraordinary art works and sound works that meet our desire for the other-worldly or the universal. Even with the extensive ornithological knowledge that the artists in my examples possess, the work they produce is highly specialized and broadly universalizing at the same time and perhaps none more so than Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992).

### **Listening for Messiaen: Seeing sound, hearing colour.**

In his devotion to birdsong, the French composer, ornithologist and devout Catholic, Messiaen understood the co-evolution of voices and his work is indispensable to any discussion of modern performance and animal acoustics. Though his huge output is largely classified as thoroughly modern, progressive, serialist and even surrealist, it is his ornithological romanticism that was the most accessible for his audience and the most frustrating for his critics. In what follows I will focus on the methods that Messiaen developed for listening to and recording birdsong and how his approach opens avenues of thinking through animal acoustics in radical and lasting ways. What was 'listening' for Messiaen? What was he listening for? Unlike many composers before Messiaen's time who occasionally incorporated birdsong into works, often as musical 'jokes' or clever displays of virtuosity and mimicry, Messiaen breaks the tradition of imitation and creates new methods of listening, interpreting and creating

art for a new post-war world.<sup>27</sup> As well as being a musical prodigy, entering the Paris Conservatoire aged eleven, the young scholar was already a keen ornithologist. But it was during his wartime experience that bird song first entered his compositions. In David Rothenberg's version of this often-recounted story, this acoustic awaking begins in the trenches:

Like the strange blending of nightingale and bomber recorded by the BBC, this collaboration between human and birds began in the midst of war. The twenty-nine-year-old Messiaen was on dawn watch in the French army in 1940, stationed in Verdun. The sun was rising and all the birds began to sing together. "Listen to them," he told fellow sentry Etienne Pasquier, a cellist, 'they're giving each other assignments. They'll reunite tonight, at which time they'll recount what they saw during the day.' ...There was also a clarinetist in the regiment, an Algerian named Henri Akoka. After many days of dawn watches Messiaen began writing a solo piece for him, *Abyss of the Birds*.<sup>28</sup>

Before Akoka had even tried to play *Abyss of the Birds*, the German forces invaded and Messiaen and his fellow soldier-musicians were captured and taken to a prisoner camp near Görlitz, called Stalag VIII A. It was here that the premiere performance of the finished piece took place. Much has been made (and mythologized, not least by

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<sup>27</sup> With the possible exception of Bela Bartók (1881-1945). Maria Anna Harley makes a convincing case around the composer's interest in folk music and its connection to the voices of the natural world, claiming some ground for Bartók in her reframing of the origins of eco-musicological theory and practice. While Bartók's references to birdsong, and to the nightingale in particular, are many and delightful, his interpretations remain on the border between romanticism and modernism, technically present but less influential than what was to emerge from Messiaen's field studies. In blunt terms, and in the context of this discussion of Messiaen, Bartók was not an ornithologist. This being said, Maria Anna Harley's perspicacious essay will hold sway in some of my examinations of ecophilosophical theories in relation to aesthetic biases on the theme of animal voices in performance practices later in this thesis. See Harley's essay "Natura naturans, natura naturata" and Bartók's Nature Music Idiom, (1995) *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, T.6, Fasc. ¾. Proceedings of the International Bartók Colloquium, Szombathely, July 3-5, 1995, Part 1. p329-349. Published by: Akadémiai Kiadó

<sup>28</sup> David Rothenberg (2005), *Why Birds Sing*, New York: Basic Books. p193

Messiaen himself) of the story of the first performance in the camp. The *Abyss of the Birds* was the third movement of what was to become Messiaen's most celebrated work, completed in captivity, the *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941). The materials available to the artist in these circumstances (provided by the Red Cross) procured a most unorthodox arrangement for a quartet of cello, piano, clarinet and violin, and with the co-operation of the Nazi officers, three thousand prisoners in rapt attention for this unusual premiere performance - all these elements contribute in varying degrees to the birth of this work and to its legendary status. The context of the Nazi camp undeniably haunts most readings of Messiaen's intentions for the piece which Rothenberg describes as soaring bird-like upwards 'towards a sonic Heaven...and the solo clarinet in the third movement is a musical attempt to link the endless enthusiasm of singing birds with the long, dark weight of eternity.'<sup>29</sup> For Messiaen, birds and their voices are the opposite of time and are eternal in their heralding of the dawn and continuous in their sonic presence. In the context of the Holocaust this eternal 'voice of nature' is of great consolation to the devout believer who saw 'the End of Time' as the gate to Eternity where his God awaited him. Messiaen's own long life was not without suffering and still he says 'in my hours of gloom, when I am suddenly aware of my own futility...what is left for me but to seek out *the true, lost face of music* somewhere off in the forest, in the fields, in the mountains or on the seashore, among the birds.'<sup>30</sup> This listening was not a passive activity. Over a lifetime of local (every region in France) and global 'birding' excursions into the field, Messiaen produced his enormous seven volume treatise, *Traité de rythme, de couleur*

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Rothenberg, p194.

<sup>30</sup> Olivier Messiaen, in *Le Guide du Concert*, 2 April 1959, quoted in Robert Sherlaw Johnson, *Messiaen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975),17. Cited in David Rothenberg, (2005) p195. Italics added



*et d'ornithologie* (1992), two volumes of which amount to twelve hundred pages of transcriptions of birdsong, mostly done without any technology.<sup>31</sup> His notation style was orientated towards the future musician or performer, transcribing rhythms, tones and any irregularities that would be useful to the interpretation of each song. In the epic *Catalogue des oiseaux* (Catalogue of the Birds, 1958), each of the thirty-eight pieces refers to a specific bird, in a particular place at a noted time of day, environment and ambience. When listening to the work being performed, only the closest reading of the composers' notes could give any indication that we are now at the seashore, that the wind is from the east, that waves are crashing against the cliffs nearby and so on. The music is complex, abstract and riveting and only the *oiseaux* in the title pricks one's ears to its origins in (almost obsessive) ornithology. Indeed contemporaneous critics of the *style oiseaux* cycles use the composer's fidelity to birdsong as a charge of mimicry and kitsch – of imitation and not interpretation. Robert Fallon has summarized the general tone of disdain as: 'Messiaen's music sounds like birdsong; birdsong is not music; therefore Messiaen's music is not music.'<sup>32</sup> Even for more appreciative writers like Trevor Hold, it was the choice of instrument that frustrated him. The piano could not be a more inappropriate means of interpretation as 'it cannot crescendo through a sustained note, or play intervals smaller than a semitone, or make a true glissando between notes – all of which birds do'.<sup>33</sup> For Hold, the details of where the music originated was a tiresome distraction and instead he called for more attention to the purely musical freedom and 'impressionistic verism' that marks the work as outstanding. Hold's reference to

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<sup>31</sup> *Traité de rythme, de couleur, et d'ornithologie* (1949–1992) ("Treatise on rhythm, colour and ornithology"), completed by Yvonne Loriod. 7 parts bound in 8 volumes. Paris: Leduc, 1994–2002.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Fallon, (2007) 'The Record of Realism in Messiaen's Bird Styles' in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature* eds Christopher Dingle and Nigel Simone, London: Ashgate

<sup>33</sup> Trevor Hold (1971), 'Messiaen's Birds', review in *Music & Letters*, Vol.52, No.2, Oxford University Press, p113.

impressionism was more than descriptive.<sup>34</sup> Messiaen had a condition called synesthesia, which meant that when he heard musical sounds he saw colours, and *vice versa*. In the *Catalogue*, it is the range of musical 'colour' that is so astonishing and surprising. The detail of the tones, subtlety of values, thrilling explosions and dark, deep shadows confirm the works unique and original visual aesthetic. The contemporary pianist Peter Hill describes his method of interpreting the work as 'examining some vast and magnificent sculpture – the west front of Chartres would be appropriate – inch by inch by torchlight.'<sup>35</sup> Prior to Hill's acclaimed performances and recordings of all of Messiaen's Piano Works, he had several opportunities to meet with the composer and discuss approaches to interpretation. He says that 'Messiaen's approach is to *translate* from nature, *inventing* parallels or 'metaphors', which have their own purely musical intensity,' (Hill, 1994, p552, italics added). The performer can be mindful of Messiaen's own foregrounding of his quasi-scientific accuracy of data collection in the field and his efforts to fully encapsulate his aural experience of the curlew in the evening or the lark rising from the gorse and so on, as Messiaen always advises such attention. But the concern for the performing artist challenged with interpreting the actual notated manuscript is not so much allegiance to the ornithological details of species representation but more an obligation to match the composer's hypersensitivity to the *experience* of listening to the 'colour' of birdsong.

Peter Hill writes of the composer that 'in performance nothing does his music a greater dis-service than an approach which achieves accuracy (in the literal sense) at the expense of imagination, that fails to explore the music in terms of its meaning and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Hold, p117.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Hill (1994), on finishing recording the Complete Piano Music of Messiaen. "For the Birds" *The Musical Times*, Vol. 135, No.1819: Musical Times Publications Ltd., p553.

atmosphere, through those nuances of rhythm and sonority which bring the notes on the page to life.’<sup>36</sup> In order to achieve this ‘life’, Hill stresses ‘virtuosity in the balancing of colour’, impulsive use of light and shade, nuance, coolness, neutral tones, sharpness, texture, luminosity and gesture. The language is of that of the painter’s palette. Perhaps for these reasons Messiaen has been called ‘an Audubon in Sound’ for the likenesses of his song portraits.<sup>37</sup> The origins of the work are intensely researched, devoted to translation with as much accuracy as is possible without depending on recordings, imbued with a fascination and consuming respect for the vocalizations of other species. However in order for this accumulation of ideas, emotions and experiences to become a work of art, the artist (in this case Peter Hill) leaves these concerns with the composer to a respectful extent and pushes on with the task of bringing this collection of notes to life. In his essay on his experience of recording the *Catalogues des Oiseaux*, Hill does not detail any ornithological investigations that he may have carried out for himself, neither does he mention the recommended forest walks and dawn listening sessions as advised by the *maestro*, or indeed any first hand experience of the cries of the tawny owl or the elusive wren. Hill is more focused on achieving the kind of *coloratura* and balance between genius and obsession that he identifies in the manuscript before him. For him the scores are ‘so complex in their detail that they appear as a blueprint not so much a representation of sounds but a recipe for *physical action*, a set of instructions which have only to be followed (as far as possible) to the letter.’<sup>38</sup> For the composer however, learning how to listen still remained of primary importance for himself as an artist and for both his

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Hill, p555

<sup>37</sup> Mathew Gurewitsch, ‘An Audubon in Sound: Messiaen’s radiant Birdsong, the Crown of his creation, Belong as much to the Artist as to Nature,’ *Atlantic Monthly* 279, No.3 (March 1997): 90, 92-96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid Hill, p555

students and audience. Even though Messiaen's piano interpretations may not have the accuracy, pitch, speed or 'glissando' of a real bird, it is the intensity of his listening that produces the extraordinary *catalogue* and transcends any obligation to faithfully recreate the sound of a bird. It is the scrutiny and attentiveness to the action of listening itself that is crucial for Messiaen. As Jean-Luc Nancy phrases it, 'listening must be examined - itself auscultated - at the keenest or tightest point of its tension and its penetration. The ear is stretched by or according to meaning.'<sup>39</sup> Messiaen challenges us to stretch our listening into his auditory field, into his neighbourhood of sound through his music. In this analysis of the qualities of listening between species, in gaps and chasms of being and becoming audible, I value Messiaen's keen disposition as exceptional because he is a uniquely in-between being himself - always listening to the sounds coming across the human-animal trenches, in his post-war world of struggle and re-imagining, carrying over his education of classical and romantic musical pedagogy into the avant-garde movements of the mid-twentieth century. He listened in the spaces between species intensely, he created music out of these spaces and he also knew that the creaturely acoustics would always be, for artists and for himself, a means of entry to another world.

In the words of Mircea Eliade, 'Becoming a bird oneself or being accompanied by a bird indicates the capacity, while still alive, to undertake the ecstatic journey to the sky and beyond.'<sup>40</sup> Messiaen's encouragements to his students on the values of time spent in the valleys and forests listening for the rumble and rhythm of life are often held as examples of his 'first-hand' method, and that his genius was evident in his

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<sup>39</sup> Nancy, J. & Mandell, C. (2007) *Listening*. (1st) New York: Fordham University Press, p26.

<sup>40</sup> Eliade, M. (1989) *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. London, England: Arkana. p98

ability to translate birdsong with such speed and accuracy. The quintessentially French image of the composer with his beret and notepad on his dawn walks ‘dans les forêts’ is a popular portrait. His extensive collection of recordings is less well known. In spite of so much attention to given his ‘live’ pen-and-ink notation of songs, Messiaen himself had no objection to learning from recordings and he had friends around the world providing him with cassette tapes of birds he would never have had the opportunity to hear in the field. Recordings of the *maestro* himself are equally rare. A tape from 1959 recently turned up in a Paris archive. In this recording the lecturer Messiaen is instructing his students as to how to listen to the horned owl. He describes his listening experience in the field in this way:

And then, in that amphitheatre of mountains at the end of the night we had the great horned owl – I must show you this figure because he is a major figure...He was huge. And his cry was truly remarkable. I’m going to try to do it for you, don’t laugh. [Messiaen emits a sort of animal howl.] A sort of serious, muffled growling, it echoes at night among the cliffs, it’s very odd...and very difficult to capture musically, because it isn’t music, it’s a noise.<sup>41</sup>

Capturing bird ‘noise’ was not only an issue for the composer, but for the ornithological community at large and while Messiaen’s evocative descriptions were being recorded in the Paris Conservatoire, major changes were happening in the halls of biological and behavioural science in the University of Cambridge. The introduction of the sound spectrograph, used to provide a visual representation of birdsong by

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<sup>41</sup> Translated from the French by Arthur Goldhammer, this is a transcription by Jean Boivin of a recording of one of Messiaen’s lectures made in the spring of 1959 by his student and future composer Francois-Bernard Mâche. The recently discovered recording is translated as ‘Bird Song’ as it appeared in *Grand Street*, No.55, Egos (winter 1996) pp134-139: Jean Stein Publishing.

W.H.Thorpe, Professor of Animal Ethology, in Cambridge in 1954, was the pivotal moment in ornithology where descriptive data using musical terminology became outdated in favour of the new, visual objectivity of the sonogram. The device was originally developed during World War II as a method of identifying enemy voices over the radio. Translating pitch, rhythm and timbre into readable images provided the break with past methods deemed necessary if ornithology was to progress in line with developments in post-war science.

Before the spectrograph, recordings of the mockingbird and the lyrebird were among the most sought after because of their long, complicated and highly ornamental songs (not least by Messiaen who had friends mail him tapes of native New Zealand species like kokako, kea, tui and ‘the strange and primitive calls of the North Island kiwi’).<sup>42</sup> However the original spectrograph of the nineteen-fifties had a very limited recording time, initially as little as two to four seconds. The choice of bird species most commonly used in the laboratory today, the chaffinch and zebra finch, were equally prioritized at the time of the arrival of the spectrograph as good recording subjects because of their learning behavior (limited) and repetitive song repertoire (short). The zebra finch excelled as a study model right up until the 1970s when the first digital audio technologies allowed for considerably more recording time. Current digital recording capacity is almost unlimited and therefore so also is the capacity for listening to recordings of, say, whole afternoons of the yellowhammer in season. But who has the time? Ornithologists and behavioural neuroscientists it seems, have

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<sup>42</sup> In a letter (1991) sent to Nicholas Armfelt thanking him for his cassette recordings of native birds, Messiaen describes each sound in musical terms –the crescendo of the Kakako, the glissando of the Kea and so on. He went on to use these new birdsongs in some of his final works, *Couleurs de la cité celeste* (1991), *Éclairs sur l’au-delà* (1988-1992) and *Concert à quatre* (1990-91). Letter reproduced by Nicholas Armfelt for Malcolm Ball’s online resource [www.oliviermessiaen.org](http://www.oliviermessiaen.org)

much to learn from the generations of finches and canaries still under their own study. Research into the fundamental biological mechanisms of how and why birds sing is ongoing and many unanswered questions remain, according to Catchpole and Slater in conclusion to their survey of more than one thousand papers for their well-known, comprehensive textbook *Birdsong: Biological Themes and Variations* (2008, p274). The subjective interpretations of birdsong that have held sway since Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871) are now stabilized by 'objective' visual data.<sup>43</sup> Where musical notation has the qualities of illustration, this new spectrographic image of a (nonhuman) language surpasses subjective interpretation. In the jump from musical notation (to be performed) to visual language (to be examined), ornithology came on stream with emerging new practices in the study of linguistics and learning. How birds learn songs was now readable as text and as hearing became seeing, listening for music became looking at the accumulating data. However I propose here that capturing bird sounds and the analysis of the capture takes as much time as it always has done - the bird is still netted or caged, transcribed or 'caught' with the close-range or long-range 'gun' microphones in use today and the digitally captured material can then be downloaded into any number of visual languages. Musical references (tone, melody, timbre, pitch) still run through biological studies of bird signals. Certainly some of the ways in which we now listen to birds has changed and largely because of technology. The impact of these new auditory resources on artists' interpretation of birdsong has been significant - as a resource - and they have certainly not resisted the arrival of the spectrograph and its technological descendants.

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<sup>43</sup> Darwin devoted almost half of the book to the study of birdsong and bird feathers and their special role in his concept of human aesthetics. In 1997 the annual Darwin College lectures at Cambridge on the theme of 'Sound' in evolution used birdsong as their only example under discussion.

### **Downloading a swan.**

When the University of Oulu commissioned Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara (b.1928) to compose a work announcing their first doctoral degree, he incorporated tape recordings of whooper swans into his three-movement orchestral piece, which was to become his best-known work. The *Cantus Arcticus: Concerto for Birds and Orchestra* (1972) also features the slowed-down recording of a shore lark in the second movement. The final movement finishes with the sound of swans and orchestra fading as the birds continue north on their migration path. In Rautavaara's composition the swan recordings from the Arctic Circle and the bogs of Finland are rhythmically in sequence with the orchestration but the two elements remain quite independent, respectfully sounding alongside each other rather than becoming an integrated whole. When listening to variations of this work, I was most taken with a recording from 1997 with Max Pommer conducting the Leipzig Symphony Orchestra. While downloading the music file from iTunes, I 'watched' the music on YouTube, or at least photographs of the region of Finland in which the piece is set, while listening to the recording. Then I looked at a video of actual whooper swans arriving on icy Finnish shores, calling in their distinctive way. There were more videos of swans landing in Japan and in Canada, and in no time I was drawn into the world of the snow goose. A promotional video from a website named 'www.performance calls.com' promised multiple methods of 'making you a better caller!' Here I could purchase any number of calling devices and a CD that promised to explain 'all the calls needed to effectively hunt the Canada goose'. A more practical and immediate option, I thought, was the *Snow Screamer*, a plastic horn that 'will have you barking, crying and hiccupping like an old snow goose at a realism level that is nothing short of



extreme.’<sup>44</sup> Three hundred thousand people had viewed this page. The *Snow Screamer* certainly offered performative possibilities to an artist easily excited by new and practical technologies on offer on the fringes of research into animal voices. However I postponed this distracting potential in favour of a more instantly gratifying opportunity to hear real swans by turning instead to the BBC, which offered sixty-one different recordings of Whooper Swans from various parts of Scotland (each recording was approximately five minutes long and cost an average of four pounds sterling). In the end I chose Number 19, ‘Whooper swan (Cygnus cygnus), whooperswancall27036.wav; length, 1:48; Year. 1989; Location, Caerlaverock, Solway, Scotland’. The description reads: ‘Calls *Cu* and Reassurance Calls While Feeding on Bank.’<sup>45</sup> My swan bears only a passing resemblance to the carefully edited swans in *Cantus Arcticus*. The sounds of the distinctive ‘*cu*’ calls are there, but in my downloaded swan they are fleshed out with barking and hiccupping and snorting and some splashing on the shore. My curiosity was satisfied that I had at least heard what a real Whooper Swan sounded like and I could mull over whether or not I could, in all subjectivity, say if it was music or noise. Thinking with Messiaen in mind, it was both music *and* noise, or perhaps a means of entering a ‘zoomusicological’ realm. In my study, at my computer, I was transported to a muddy bank in Scotland for four minutes via the trembling urgencies of a recording of a Whooper Swan. In *Cantus Arcticus*, Rautavaara’s elegiac and dreamlike orchestrations are of course not to be compared to a BBC outside broadcast; it’s an interpretation with no obligation to realism. But nowhere in the piece is the swan’s call translated into music *per se*. The sound of the swan is there beside the violins and the oboes, sounding quite *like* a

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<sup>44</sup> Retrieved from [www.performancecalls.com/snow\\_goose\\_calls.html](http://www.performancecalls.com/snow_goose_calls.html)

<sup>45</sup> Downloaded from [www.soundeffects.ch/surround-sound-effects](http://www.soundeffects.ch/surround-sound-effects). April 1st, 2012

swan. But it is not like my Scottish swan who is snorting and *cu*-ing and sloshing in the water while other swans can be heard in the distance and the wind sounds freezing; the atmosphere is evocative of the physical reality of this large bird, of its own avian drama and its experience of a place, near Caerlaverock, and of what it sounds like for a swan to be a swan.

The English composer and experimentalist Jonathan Harvey (b. 1939) with his recordings of Californian songbirds, takes the possibilities of digital recording considerably further than Rautavaara. Using synthesizers which contain the samples of birdsongs which are manipulated in performance by connecting them to a concert piano, Harvey wrote and scored *Bird Concerto with Pianosong* (2001) to be performed using live electronics in real-time with a seventeen-piece ensemble, an accordion and a metal percussionist. In a recording of the piece being performed live at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in 2009, the result is a seamless exuberance of sound with no trace of the formidable technical challenges the work presents to the performers, especially the pianist who is working from both a written score on paper and a digital screen showing the song samples, one placed above the other on top of the piano.<sup>46</sup> In contrast with these technological advances, there is an increasing interest among a contemporary generation of artists in sound recording equipment that is obsolete, unusual and invariably pre-digital.<sup>47</sup> Aleksander Kolkowski (b.1959) has featured wax cylinders of recordings in his performances along with phonograph recordings, a rotating horned string quartet, a Serinette (or bird organ) and for a commissioned

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<sup>46</sup> Published by NMC Recordings Ltd, 2011, Jonathan Harvey – *Bird Concerto with Pianosong*, London Sinfonietta, Hideki Nagano, piano.

<sup>47</sup> Damon Albarn used a variety of strange and wonderful instruments in his opera *Monkey, Journey to the West* (2007) including a musical saw, ondes Martenot, a glass harmonica and a klaxophone made of car-horns attached to a keyboard.

piece titled *Mechanical Landscape with Bird* (2004) he featured eight live canaries along with a cluster of unusual, outdated sound equipment.<sup>48</sup> Artists such as Kolkowski, who use birdsong in music compositions, performances and arrangements, have access to a wealth of information that has come from the laboratories of neuroscience or from the fieldwork of biologists. Like Messiaen, these artists' worlds are prioritized and defined by their aural senses. Perhaps questions remain about the methods of interpretation. Using recordings of birds in compositions and live performances, and even live birds on occasion, the birdsong is being *attached* to compositions in the works cited above. The orchestrations may be looser, more abstract and closer in rhythmic structure to birdsong, but ultimately these works have more in common with Respighi's *Pines of Rome* (1924), the first composer to use a recording of a nightingale in the live performance of his symphonic poem. The effect is delightful but decorative - and in Respighi's case this was its function, as the nightingale was not the subject of his poem.

A recording of a bird in a performance context does not, I argue, move a work of art any closer to understanding or illuminating the experience of listening to a bird or, for that matter, to the experience of what it is like for a bird to listen to another bird, however incidental that may be to the major or minor dramatic intentions of the work. Bringing live birds to perform in the concert hall or art gallery distances them even further as they become the uncanny 'Other' on stage. There the bird will always be the generalized animal object, a fetishized other with remote allegiances to its

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<sup>48</sup>Aleksander Kolkowski (2004) *Recording Angels: "Mechanical Landscape with Bird"* for 8 singing canaries, Serinette (bird-organ), 2 Phonographs and a rotating string quartet with horned instruments. Commissioned by Maerz Musik - Festival für aktuelle Musik, Sophiensæle, Berlin

sonic origins, and more importantly its vocalized intentions, if there is openness to the idea that animal sounds have intentionality. If an artist employs animal sounds in the manifestation of their ideas, even if these ideas are concerned with an analysis of animals or human and animal relations and comparisons, it is in the *translations* and *transformations* of material like avian communication behavior that the artist/performer can bring a listening audience closer to understanding what it is they hear and what they may be listening for, whether it is *via* a piano, a flute, a glass harmonica or a musical saw. The pathway from animal throat (in this case the bird's syrinx) to human ear through to composer's hand and through digital wizardry, creating the notated music that will be embodied in the musician's physical performance or in the singer's control of the larynx - this transformational activity, by whatever means, is the method to get us over and back across the gaps between species.

In Rachel Mundy's essay on *Birdsong and the Image of Evolution* (2009) she states that the arrival of the spectrograph in ornithology meant the creation of a new abyss 'in allowing the question of aesthetics to disappear in the unbridgeable gap between the sciences and the study of aesthetics we so tellingly term 'the humanities'.'<sup>49</sup> Mundy aligns some of this shift to the prominence of linguistics in post-war French theory especially and has genuine concerns about hierarchies that have emerged between language, illustration and sound. Her analysis can be expanded further, beyond the spectrogram and its early influences. In the mid-1970s animal bodies began to re-enter the realm of arts practices, often through the new medium of live art with the specific intention in many cases of resisting notions of hierarchies within

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<sup>49</sup> Rachel Mundy, (2009), *Birdsong and the Image of Evolution*, *Society and Animals*, Leiden: Brill. p206

the art world and the world of commerce. One of the questions to emerge from this period was the importance of 'liveness' and what Philip Auslander has called the 'evangelical fervour' for the 'purity' of the live performance - and even more so for the study of integrity of the live performance in its purity and its resistance to technologized, televised and mediatized representations.<sup>50</sup> By focusing on artists who have integrated technologies of sound into their interpretations of animal voices, I am suggesting that these technologies are essential mechanisms by which humans have captured, interpreted and performed animal vocalizations and which have made possible a continuum as well as an evolution of our responses to the sonic realm we inhabit with other species.

### **Finches and Guitars.**

Between 1999 and 2007, the French artist Celeste Boursier-Mougenot made five different versions of his installation *From here to ear* which involves another merger of songbirds, stringed instruments and sound transmitters. The staging of the work in each art gallery space positions a flock of thirty or more zebra finches, piano strings and electric guitars connected to microphones and amplifiers. Bird seed, water feeders and nesting boxes are also distributed about the space through which visitors can wander at will, interacting with the birds and the audio-field they are producing by landing occasionally on the musical instruments. Compared with the Harrison rural garden, the context, intention and result could not be more different even though the essential elements remain the same. In *From here to ear* the new habitat is a modern architectural, urban interior; invariably a 'white cube' space with restricted

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<sup>50</sup> Philip Auslander (1995) *Evangelical Fervour*, TDR, Vol.39, No.4. MIT press. pp178-183

entry and exit for both humans and birds.<sup>51</sup> The stringed instruments have departed entirely from their designed function, becoming passive objects that are animated solely when perched upon by the birds. As for the zebra finches, these twittering, excitable birds are very far from the Surrey nightingale, the Keatsian 'winged dryad of the trees.'<sup>52</sup> All the birds used in Boursier-Mougenot's installations were captive-bred birds. So what are we listening to now? And why has this particular performance installation had so many reprises and considerable critical attention?

To begin with there is the absence of the human performer/musician, in any literal sense. The human audience is certainly 'performing' an action as witnesses to the live event. But here it is the animal that dominates the activity and specifically the sound of the animal that is at the centre of concern. The discordant crashing, fluttering and chirping of the flock that greets the visitor/ listener (as one hears the sounds before entering the space) is an entirely post-modern acoustic - chaotic, defying classification, unpredictable and unexpected. Musical territories have been broken down to produce a radically new soundscape that is reflective of its time. The Gibson electric guitar, which has defined many musical genres of the late twentieth century, is made almost redundant of its design or intention. The modern art gallery is overtaken by animal vocals that sound chaotic to human ears. The pristine art gallery is strewn with bird food and droppings, grass lawns and bird houses, sound equipment and electronics. The sound transmitters are uncontrollably producing every random tic and crash with no editorial structure or scheme. In musicological terms, all the

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<sup>51</sup> In the 'Fourth Version' at the Lentos Museum of Modern Art, Linz, Austria, entry to the art aviary for the visitor required walking through a red tunnel that vibrated with stroboscopes which ensured no finch would be persuaded to attempt an escape.

<sup>52</sup> John Keats (1795-1821), Ode to a Nightingale, *Romantic Poetry and Prose: The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, Bloom, H and Trilling, L (eds) 1973 London: Oxford University Press

rules and systems are flung out in favour of a newly exposed, raw sound reality. Within this auditory field there is a breakdown of one of the principles of performing music – directionality. Standing inside the installation, it is hard to predict where the sound will come from next, and it is the sound we are here to experience. The birds are unpredictably fast, they don't all move or sing together, some move very little. The sound structure is closer to a forest experience than a concert hall. In an auditorium, both eye and ear can focus, selectively and 'fringe phenomena'- whispering, coughing, people leaving and entering are in balanced ratio to each other and to one's own shifting interest. The listener hears what he or she wants to hear, we listen intentionally (Idhe, 2007). While attempting to analyze this 'fringe-focus' ratio in *From here to ear*, I am aware that I am here for the lightness of the bird to land on the heavy industrial twang of the guitar. I am listening *for* this crash of unlikely media to be articulated and for the artists' intentions and my own to synchronize. In this way I am prioritizing within my auditory field. I am therefore listening intentionally, and in some ways, like the bird, teasing apart all of the acoustics at play, then re-assembling them to try and find my own listening intentions at the centre of this barrage of sound. However, the attempt is confounded by the constant slippage away from the 'particular' and into the 'abstract'. Is this therefore a metaphysical musical 'universal'? Possibly, but certainly it is a sound that could not have been imagined or produced before its time.

Celeste Boursier-Mougenot stringently asserts that this is 'music'. He began his career as a composer and musician and between 1985 and 1994 he held a position as composer for the Pascal Rambert Theatre Company. He latterly created installations in contemporary art spaces that focused on a 'live' sound experience – randomly

evolving soundscapes that reflected and responded to the environment in which they occurred. Before using birds, his more usual materials came from the quotidian of urban life – vacuum cleaners, electric fans, dinner plates and bowls, delivery trucks and so on. James Trainor aligns this artist's process 'with the biological processes of natural selection' which result in an open-ended, continuous branching and dividing of sounds that 'build, cluster and die out accordingly, the cadences, interludes and codas of an infinite number of non-events describable as music.'<sup>53</sup>

In many ways the zebra finches in these installations could be described as a quotidian bird. Zebra finches constitute the highest percentage of songbirds produced in laboratories and other artificial environments for scientific study. Fifty-one percent of neurobiological studies of birdsong are based on analysis of captive zebra finches. Some of the reasons for their popularity are the species' relatively limited repertoires, the lack of regional dialects and the virtual inability to mimic recently heard sounds or to manipulate and develop songs. The zebra finch is a 'close-ended' learner and therefore especially suited to the search for universals sought by certain branches of science. The problem here is that basing any theories of imitative vocal behavior of captive zebra finches as a model for human speech learning only reveals the tight corners into which this process has wedged itself. Given the diversity of songbirds available for study (some forty-five hundred) and the multiple environments that impact on the qualities and functions of vocal patterns of each species, alongside the visual and territorial physical actions and re-actions of birds, what the zebra finch is bringing to neuroscience is as limited as the environment in which it is being analyzed (Lehrman, 1971: Michel, 2010).

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<sup>53</sup> J. Trainor, 2002. 'Celeste Boursier-Mougenot', *Frieze*, Issue 64, Jan-Feb 2002



These details are not lost on Boursier-Mougenot in his choice of bird for his exploration of the contemporary 'auditory field'. He has chosen his materials precisely because of their 'universalizing' qualities. (To give a contrasting example, in Mircea Cantor's exhibition at Camden Arts Centre in 2009, he housed a peacock and a peahen in a large golden cage for the six-week installation, to the consternation of some animal welfare groups. The charismatic birds were there as universal symbols of 'baroque power and extravagance'<sup>54</sup>. There were relatively few enquiries about the zebra finches when *From here to ear* was staged at the Barbican). The cacophonous, if continuous, stream of bird sounds in *From here to ear* eliminates any individual concerns of animal 'personhood', vocalizing of 'self' or individuation of any kind on the part of the animal. Boursier-Mougenot's flocks of finches, groups of guitars and stacks of amplifiers drown out any possibility of the singular and instead every element, including the listening human visitor, becomes a poly-harmonic whole. Like the broadcasts of the cellist and the nightingale, once again in *From here to ear*, an iconic work emerges providing a slice of contemporary acoustic experience, albeit an urban one, where machine, science and nature are enmeshed within their own time to reveal our listening selves to ourselves.

For Jean-Luc Nancy, 'to be listening is to be always on the edge of meaning, or in a edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, this margin.'<sup>55</sup> In this chapter I have examined a collection of

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<sup>54</sup> Sophie Moiroux (2009) '20 keys to understand Mircea Cantor or; his DNA gate', File note# 39 *Mircea Cantor: The Need for Uncertainty*. Camden Arts Centre. Accessed from [www.mirceacantor.ro/images/CAMDEN-mc.pdf](http://www.mirceacantor.ro/images/CAMDEN-mc.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid Nancy, *Listening*, p7

performance practices where the ventriloquistic voices of birds, in their weightless, free flying way, open an acoustic dimension that quickly becomes filled with our evolving and changing needs and desires. Like the dodo in the crate, or the zebra finch and the electric guitar or the nightingale and the cello, each performance is an attempt to meet ourselves half way, between our vocal instruments and theirs, somewhere between signaling and singing, sounding out in the air between land and sky and in the folds of speech and song, between noise and communication, in between human and animal.

## Chapter Two.

### Becoming Acoustic: Concealing and revealing sound in hunting and performance intra-action.

*Their song takes effect at midday, in a windless calm.  
The end of that song is death.*

Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena*

At the opening presentation of *Bungalow Germania*, an installation in the German pavilion for the fourteenth International Architecture Biennale in Venice (2014), the choreographer William Forsythe produced an acoustic event titled *Birds, Bonn 1964*, in which he merged hunting, music, mimicry and architectural space. The installation melded the interior of the German pavilion (1914) with a reproduction of the interior of the Kanzler Bungalow (Bonn, 1964), the German Chancellor's parkland residence, to produce a century-spanning intervention where the architects Alex Lehnerer and Savvas Ciriacidis ask us to be in several places at once – in Venice, in Bonn, in a domestic living room inside a grand marble lined exhibition hall.<sup>56</sup> Within these deceptions, Forsythe's intention was to reproduce the experience of listening to song birds in a park in Germany by choreographing sound artist Daniela Cattivelli and local Italian song bird imitators or *Chioccolatori* to move about the pavilion, warbling and

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<sup>56</sup> See images of installation at <http://bungalowgermania.de/en/exhibition>

chirruping while behaving as casually as the visitors to the exhibition. Positioning the acoustic performance of Cattivelli and the bird singers throughout the installation Forsythe's choreography conjugates cultural objects, sound objects (bird song) and performing bodies and buildings across time.<sup>57</sup> The bizarre and beautiful mixture of architectural styles, materials and spaces finds an acoustic echo in the encounter with the Chioccolatori, men who sing like blackbirds using a hunting technique dating from medieval tradition of the Veneto region. The installation presents these sounds and spaces in thick multiple layers of political, social and animal temporalities and asks us to look back into their histories as well as to think about possible spatial-acoustic strategies to come.

As Joseph Roach has suggested, every performance is positioned at a junction:

Choosing the right moment to look back and the right moment to look forward is the crux of any successful performance, which must combine invention with memory: invention without memory is irresponsible; memory without invention is deadly.<sup>58</sup>

The combinations presented in the pavilion by both Forsythe and the architects are certainly inventive, how the bungalow drops in to the centre of the pavilion, where leather couches disappear into marble walls and glazed sliding exterior doors open on to airless interior courtyards. In this uncanny space the acoustics of the bird singers act as a memory trigger: is this what a blackbird in a park in Germany might have sounded like? How would birdsong have articulated these glass rooms and empty inner courtyards? And most immediately where is the sound of the singing

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<sup>57</sup> For a clip of the opening of the pavilion installation of 'Birds, Bonn (1964) see <http://vimeo.com/99372575>

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Roach, "Performance: The Blunders of Orpheus," *PMLA* 125. No 4 (October 2010): 1083

bird coming from and what is it doing here? It is this last question that initiates the complexities of the performance that are most relevant to this thesis. What are animal voices doing in human performance practices? In this case, I believe we are presented with what has been termed the *acousmatic* voice – the voice we can hear without seeing or even knowing its origin (Schaeffer, 1966).

In this chapter I will explore the *acousmatics* of animal voices, its histories, possible origins and the various meanings that can be drawn from its functions in contemporary performance events and art installations by Cattivelli and others. It is my aim to introduce animal acoustics into the study of contemporary acousmatics, a subject which has been re-visited many times since its inception as a term to describe modern sound art and composition by Pierre Schaeffer (1910-1995) in 1966. The territory of acousmatic sound is invariably ritualized and mythologized (Schafer, 1994), urban, industrial, and profoundly human (LaBelle, 2010; Kane, 2014; Goddard et al, 2012) or virtual, cinematic and technologically uncanny (Chion, 1999; Dolar, 2006). For example, in R. Murray Schafer's first major study of the histories involved in our current sonic environment, animal acoustics are always primal, originating in a 'pastoral soundscape' complete with bees and shepherds piping to each other, interrupted only by war and religion (calls to arms or to prayer, both sounded by the village church bell). The predominant sound that Schafer shares with 'peasants and tribesmen' in his last visits to the countryside is 'a vast silence.'<sup>59</sup> Animal acoustics and acousmatics have not been developed in the contemporary world of these sound theorists who are focused on the spatial and temporal separations of sounds from the

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<sup>59</sup> R. Murray Schafer (1994) *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books. p52

exclusively human/urban sources they identify in contemporary music, in Sound Studies and in acoustic art theory.

In the ideas and actions of artists considered in my thesis, the historical primal origins of acousmatic animal sounds come to the fore in a contemporary performance such as *Birds, Bonn 1964* in the German pavilion. It is the intervention of the bird singers that cuts through the thickening geologies of past and future cultures that the architects present to us. By invoking and re-creating an atmosphere and memory of another time and place through their imitations of bird song, the Chioccolatori and Cattivelli acousmatically bring to life the historical and contemporary experience of the space. The territories where human and animal sounds and their functions conjugate are the central intricacies that I perceive have been left aside in the theoretical expansion of Schaeffer's original '*acousmatique*.'<sup>60</sup>

In my investigation into the functions of animal acoustics in human performance practices in this chapter I will show how the historical and the contemporary use of animal acoustics in both hunting and art practices co-evolved and co-exist alongside each other. I will further argue that they must always retain their essential acousmatic and ventriloquistic rationale in order to achieve the intentions within the stage-ings of the artist-becoming-animal. I will return to these theories of ventriloquism further in the thesis but I will discuss some of the concerns of the ventriloquial body as sound object here in order to distinguish the deeper points of sameness and difference that run in tandem with acousmatic voices and sounds.

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<sup>60</sup> Pierre Schaeffer (2013) *In Search of a Concrete Music*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Visibility and invisibility are shared traits but spatiality and territoriality play a far stronger role in defining what counts as an acousmatic event. In what follows, I describe how animal acoustics are always already acousmatic: how human and animal acousmatic entanglements are informed by spatial circumstance and continual actions of de-territorialization and re-territorialization of the sonic self: how these phenomena are reflected and developed in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari where they theorize on creative relationships with the animal world: how their theory of *becoming-animal* emerges from an enquiry into blurred boundaries and zones of proximity in the hyphenated experience of being human-animal-molecule, all of which have a bio-acoustic dimension. In addition I am using the work of the sound artist Cattivelli and her projects with the bird-singers of Northern Italy, the Chioccolatori, as a main structure for this chapter, from inside which I can shape the theories I am associating with animal acoustics and animal becomings.

### **What are Acousmatics?**

The etymological origins of acousmaticism are especially relevant to any examination of vocal performativity. The Acousmatics were the students of Pythagoras who followed his teaching from behind a curtain, so as not to be distracted by the physical perfection of the philosopher himself. Pythagoras' own education towards idealism involved extended periods of what we might now call veganism as well as long years in a cave without any care for anything as banal as day or night. The beauty of his theorems was so overwhelming to his audience that he was encumbered to develop his own method of teaching from behind a veil. In their thousands, the Acousmatics assembled to listen to 'the divine' teacher (who, after he died was referred to as 'that man'), a mathematician who eschewed everyday sluggishness above all and directed

his disciples towards a comprehension of themselves ‘in symphony, harmony, rhythm and all things that procure concord.’<sup>61</sup> The Pythagorean veil disembodies the narrator from his text and his spectators who were so astonished at the visual beauty of his theorems that they were more content to become ‘auditors’ and learn in the auditorium. Pythagoras’s veil in the first instance removes the physical image of the orator entirely and disembodies knowledge from presence. In a further disruption, Pythagoras’s veil articulates a drive to intensify the reception and perception of ideas. In this chapter I analyze acousmatic intensities in the construction of performances, where concealing and revealing different kinds of voices becomes the method by which the artists realize their ideas.

At the *Documenta* art festival in Kassel, Germany, collaborators Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla installed their work *Raptor’s Rupture* (2012) in the Weinberg Bunker, a man-made series of shelters tunneled deep into limestone and now open to guided visitors. In Allora and Calzadilla’s filmed performance, a flautist plays a replica of a thirty-five thousand year-old flute made from the bone of a palaeolithic Griffon vulture and in the company of an actual vulture, an evolutionary descendent, which is currently threatened with extinction. The artists’ intention is to combine human cultural histories and avian destinies informed by the disciplines of zoology, ecology, archaeology, musicology and classical myth. The flautist, Bernadette Käfer, tries to provoke a reaction from the bird as well as attempting to produce some percussive and melodic sounds from the flute. The bird’s indifference and the timidity of the flute music ensure that ‘the performance is a failure. Echoing the species’ existential

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<sup>61</sup> Iamblichus, c. 250-ca. 330. (1905). *The life of Pythagoras*. Abridged. Trans. Thomas Taylor. Los Angeles: Theosophical Publishing House.



predicament, all the musician can draw from the delicate perforated bone is a soft wheeze.’<sup>62</sup> However the experience of finding one’s way into the deep caverns and being led all the while by the sound of the bone flute is what becomes the most memorable aspect of the work. The anticipation of seeing the vulture and the enigmatic flute and hearing the strange piping and percussion echo through the cave-like spaces is a powerful, theatrical experience that depends on these creaturely acousmatics.

Acousmatics as a device incorporates the ventriloquial voices I referred to in the previous chapter. In Steven Connor’s study of ventriloquism he traces a history of the dislocated, disembodied voice that begins with expressions of supernatural authority, always commanding and admonishing, the voice of ritual and fear. Issues of identity, power and ownership have always been worked out ventriloquistically within performance cultures. For Connor ‘all performance is broadly ventriloquial, in a double movement whereby the performer gives his or her voice to another’ and in turn raises broader contemporary ethical concerns or ‘propriety thematics’ of the voice and violations of its ownership. While the familiar figure of the ventriloquist dummy may be our closest association with the term, the comedy of the anarchic puppet has its history in unseen voices of terror. With the dummy, Connor literally *sees* the end of ventriloquism as the voice that was once disembodied, omnipotent and fantastical and is relocated and resounding in the banal body of the dummy. Now that we can *see* where the voice has gone, Connor suggests, the dummy becomes a trope of mourning for ‘the loss *of the loss* of the voice. We have been severed, not from

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<sup>62</sup> Alex Farquharson and Kaelen Wilson-Goldie (2012) ‘Get Together’ in *Frieze*, Issue 149, September 2012. <http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/get-together>. Accessed 29.01.15

our voices, but from the pain of that severance.’<sup>63</sup> The particular technical details of ventriloquism limit its scope within the broad realm of acousmaticism because the ventriloquistic sound object depends for its success on being discovered, on its point of origin being seen, in order to become a phenomenon. In order for the throwing of the voice into another body, puppet, or recording device to be a successful performance the audience must know ultimately, where it is being thrown from so we that may marvel at what is being hidden and what is being revealed. In this way ventriloquism is a performative extension of the action of speaking or singing, from unseen sources inside the body, in the larynx, the belly, the stomach, the lungs. According to Mladen Dolar, ‘every emission of the voice is by its very essence ventriloquism...The fact that we see the aperture does not demystify the voice; on the contrary, it enhances the enigma.’<sup>64</sup>

The ventriloquial voice has lost some of its unique qualities with the advances in technological transformations as I analyzed in the last chapter, beginning with the radio and leading to the contemporary rendering of the voice from its bodily origins in the multiples of methods of ‘splitting the voice *from itself*, pulverizing the vocalic body into digital granularity.’<sup>65</sup> This digital disintegration of voice and body is what, I argue following Connor, fuels the urgency with which some vocal performers push their ‘impoverished, dismembered voice-body’ into a state of stubborn survivalist action; where the primacy of what they can produce with their own voice-body alone,

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<sup>63</sup> Steven Connor (2001) ‘Violence, Ventriloquism and the Vocalic Body’ in *Performance and Psychoanalysis*, eds Campbell, P and Kear, A. London: Routledge. P75

<sup>64</sup> Mladen Dolar (2006) *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press. P70

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Connor. p92

amid all the reproduced noise that surrounds them, maintains a connection with an archaic and eternal sounding out of the world.<sup>66</sup>

### **Problems of origin: the 'art' of the Chioccolatori.**

What does Joseph Roach mean when he says that separating memory from invention in performance is a potentially deadly and irresponsible act? What is at risk of death? Who is responsible? He suggests that getting the right balance of memory, of history, and invention or imagination and at 'the right moment' places performance in a precarious position, a 'crux' of looking back and looking forward. Memory, invention and death can be extracted as the essential themes at work in the spectacle of the Chioccolatori who perform and compete for the prizes in bird-imitation at the annual Festival of the Birds, (*Sagra dei Osei*) which has taken place every August in the town of Sacile in north-eastern Italy since 1274 AD. They organize 'schools' of *chiccolo* to learn the 'ancient systems' and skills, which 'preserve the traditions and art of imitation of bird song.'<sup>67</sup> For the joint organizers - the ACET (European Association of Traditional Hunting) and the l'ANNU Migratoristi (Association for the Protection and preservation of traditional Italian Hunting of Migratory Birds) the highlight of the festival is the European Championship of *chioccolo*, where Italian, French And Spanish bird-singers compete for Gold, Silver and Bronze medals in the three main categories: Thrush, Redwing and Blackbird. In a curious reversal of the acousmatics usually attached to bird song and its imitators, the rules of the competition in Sacile state that the jury be strictly hidden from view (usually behind a panel) so that they may not identify the singers and concentrate on the quality of their song. In the Sagra

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.bighunter.it/tabid/204/mid/730/newsid730/13594>

dei Osei of 2014 Camillo Prosdocimo led the Italian team to victory taking Gold in all categories. However, in his work with artists in their installations and performances, such as in the German pavilion, Prosdocimo is asked to step outside the hunting context and the possibility of animal death which has produced his skills. Instead he transposes these skills into the radically different territory and set of ideas in an auditorium or gallery where it is exclusively his talent as an imitator and performer that are being heard and then observed. In my view, Prosdocimo and his fellow Chioccolatori never depart from the 'ancient art' that they embody. They are always deeply connected to the hunting fraternity they represent which only exists as a 'tradition' because of its historical connection to the hunting of migratory birds. The festival at Sacile can be traced back seven hundred years but the hunting and eating of birds, as well as adapting and imitating their acoustics for both trapping and cultural reasons, becomes conceived as a timeless action as I will show. I further suggest that, with the exception of Cattivelli, artists who have engaged the Chioccolatori in their work are more enamoured with the strangeness and beauty of the singing men and do not acknowledge the complex, contemporary issues over which the Italian hunting communities and their opponents are in conflict. I will describe some of the artistic events in more detail further along but, as Roach advises, performance and its extended disciplines such as writing about performance comes with its own set of responsibilities.

When the Chioccolatori gather in Sacile for their singing festival, they move about among the traders and bird sellers who converge in their thousands to one of Italy's oldest recorded animal markets. The support for the event is substantial, involving the hunting Associations named above along with the Pro Sacile Chamber of

Commerce, the various authorities of the Province of Pordenone and the Province of Trevisio and under the auspices and support of the European Association of Federation for Hunting and Conservation (FACE: The Voice of European Hunters). These groups and their supporters also unite in their general support for Italy's complicated hunting laws, which vary from province to province and are further complicated, for anti-hunting activists, by a vagueness of terms.<sup>68</sup> It is under the canopy of these traditions, innovations and conservations that the Chioccolatoro stands to perform his interpretation or 'rendition' or likeness of a blackbird while an 'acousmatic' jury listens from behind a veil. In his 'Blackbird' we hear the first notes that will inevitably lead to another kind of rendition of the animal – its death and consumption by the hunter. A recurring rubric of animal capitalization through rendition is the historical wonderment at mimesis, which Michael Taussig defines as 'the nature culture uses to create a second nature,' the faculty to copy or to imitate.<sup>69</sup>

In what Nicole Shukin calls the "double entendre" of rendering, ...deeply suggestive of the complicity of representational and material economies in the production of (animal) capital' the imitation or 'mimesis' of the animal as part of its production is one of the labours or faculties of biopolitics.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Shukin finds mimesis to be constitutional in the real workings of power, not only as a product of it. In historical

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<sup>68</sup> For example, the most debated law among hunters and animal activists alike is Law 157 of 1992 art.12 which described a "hunting exercise" as "any act directed at the killing and hunting of wildlife" and which therefore can include a very broad range of 'exercises' such as owning a gun or even 'owning the funds allocated for this purpose' or in one case "completely objective elements liable to constitute a case of exercise of hunting." Vague and unclear as to what 'action' can now be considered 'hunting' the hunting lobby seeks clarification on the wording so as to define what can and cannot be defined as an action that might show an intention to hunt. Animal welfare activists demand an outright ban. <http://www.bighunter.it/Home/Blog/tabid/58/EntryId/510/NOZIONE-DI-ESERCIZIO-VENATORIO.aspx>. Accessed Sunday 14 December 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Taussig (1993) *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge. xviii

<sup>70</sup> Nicole Shukin (2009) *Animal Capital*. Posthumanities 6, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p51

and theoretical genealogies of biopower, she identifies the ‘rubrics of rendering, which the economy of mimesis and the business of animal recycling share.’<sup>71</sup> The history of hunting and eating animals as well as imitating them and even celebrating, worshiping or fetishizing them is co-constitutional with contemporary practices of animal rendition, or rather capitalist biopower has made it so. The perception that these practices are ancient, universal and common to all populations has been used to obscure the reality of some contemporary thinking and re-thinking of these relationships, while it is the notion of ancient traditions that is continually used to shut down this discussion (Shukin, 2009). In the context of the *chiccolatori* and their ‘traditions’ and ancient practices, this paradigm is particularly evident where objections to the hunting of migrating birds are met with staunch arguments of the historical and the archaic merits of the practices.

The statistics of contemporary songbird hunting and rendition in the Veneto province alone is staggering. Beginning with the individual hunter, his legal daily quota of resident and migrating songbirds during the hunting season, is twenty per day. A combination of eleven thousand legal hides, traps, nets and lures across northern Italy ensures a large-scale annual capture that rises to six-hundred and fifty thousand birds rendered in Lombardy alone. The legal hunting limit of larks, lapwings, robins and other resident songbirds stands at twenty million per year.<sup>72</sup> One of the more common methods of luring the passing flocks of birds is the decoy. Birds are trapped early in the season and kept caged in dark cellars for the summer months. When the migration begins, these birds are brought into the light. Deceived into thinking it is

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid Shukin.

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.komitee.de/en/homepage>. From CABS press release. Accessed 27.May, 2015.

Spring, this decoy bird sings and in doing so seals the fate of those it wishes to seduce. In a double deception, it is this Spring song that lures the passing flocks into the cages and from there into the restaurant kitchen. Here again Roach's combinations of imitation, responsibility and mortality are tested. In this complicated knot of tradition, animal acoustics and biopower it is the hiding and revealing of the animal's voice that is its unstoppable undoing.

In response to these actions, another community is taking on a different set of responsibilities. Activists campaigning against these liberal hunting laws organize summer and autumn camps where hundreds of volunteers go on camping expeditions to dismantle nets and snares and free decoy birds. For example, when CABS (Committee Against Bird Slaughter) began their campaigns in the 1980s they estimated that three-hundred thousand bow-traps targeting robins were being set every year across northern Italy. Because of their annual campaigns and dismantling expeditions, CABS now calculate that around two thousand Robin bow-traps are erected. The changes brought about by legal challenges and on-the-ground activism has radically altered how songbirds and humans interrelate in this one area of Europe. CABS also focuses a great deal of energy on Greece, where traditions of snaring migrating birds through caged decoys and other poaching methods are active and actively defended. However the principal problem in all countries where CABS is active is as much of an issue for the legal hunting agencies and comes in the form of the poacher.

Hunter organizations blame the poachers for all of the extra captures and kills that occur outside the legal limits of the law. For the activists, the most difficult and even

dangerous aspect of their dismantling expeditions are engaging with poachers, often on private land who adamantly claim their right to ancient traditions and generations of skills. Hidden and militant, the poacher argues for his traps as a connection to an even more timeless, prehistoric past. Shukin concisely interprets this argument for hunting and killing animals where she writes:

Via this description of rendering, animal capital melts back into a timeless tableau of use value, appearing to be anthropologically continuous with an age-old practice of using every part of the animal.<sup>73</sup>

In response to the poachers claim to historical privilege, the CABS campaigners are quick to remind the poachers that when their forefathers captured thrushes and redwings in the same field for hundreds of years their needs were entirely different and there were millions of more birds and fewer people. The poachers claim, as do the legal hunters, that the activists, along with the government, are forcing a great cultural loss and the breaking of the epic narrative with their ancestors and the land itself. The activists are motivated by a different sense of loss and also look to a pre-historic time when bird migration was uninterrupted by issues of tradition, memory and cultural practice.

Which actions and behaviours involving or relating to animal rendition are to be considered 'art' and tradition and by whom? How do some practices become barbaric and others elevated to an artform? In the cases involving the Chioccolatori that I am using here, where does their song begin and end and what territory does it describe today? Intentions become confused in the open spaces between treasured and despised traditions. In these spaces artists, activists, hunters and animals are crossing

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Shukin, p60



into each other's territories in ways that are producing events that question the connections between memory, invention and animal death. In each case the arguments are further entangled by theories and problems of origin. It is this time-out-of-mind aspect of the context I have been describing that I wish to focus on momentarily as I believe it is the most complicating hinge that has determined much of the language and thinking that has informed the practices I described above.

### **Problems of origin: Palaeoperformance.**

In taking these steps back into the much-contested arena of the origins of theatre and performance my intention is to demonstrate how the presence of both animals and "the animal" has been central to these developments and indeed cannot be separated from any history of performance, from its memory or from its invention. Creaturely acoustics are present at all origin points that travel back through the Dionysian cycles favoured as cradles of drama by traditional theatre historians and back further to ritualized social events from the Upper Palaeolithic era onwards as argued by Richard Schechner (2002) and Yann-Pierre Montelle (2009).<sup>74</sup> The sound producing artifacts that have been gathered from the hundreds of caves where evidence of prehistoric social life appears in the form of paintings are, like the paintings, exclusively animal. Whistle, flutes and bull-roarers made from the bones, antlers and tusks of the animals depicted on the walls of the deep caves in Southern France and

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<sup>74</sup> Indeed in Schechner's own play, *Dionysus in 69* (1968) based on Euripides' *Bacchae* (405BC), primal animal references build towards the anarchic climax where the followers of the god turn from sensual lovers into growling and screaming cat-demons, who in turn tear apart the body of the king Pentheus. Their mutation is signaled by their snarling, blood-curdling voices. 'As Schechner reports, the women learnt to make their "bodies into those of animals, especially big cats" for the "animal chase."' This had the effect that "pandemonium filled the Room, with screams of the audience joining our own" (Schechner, 1970).' Cited in Fischer-Lichte, E. (2014) *Dionysus Resurrected: Performances of Euripides' the Bacchae in a Globalizing World*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell. p42.

Northern Spain provided scholars with enough evidence to formulate extensive theories about initiation ceremonies, pre-hunting rituals and shamanistic rites of passage that have dominated speculation on what was taking place in these caves during the relatively short “creative explosion” of the ‘Refuge Interval’ era between the ice ages (Pfeiffer, 1982). The extraordinary paintings of charismatic mega-fauna such as mammoth and bison have conventionally led archaeologists to formulate elaborate theories of initiation ceremonies of the male hunter facing and killing the enormous beast. More recent zooarchaeological revisions of these theories point out that the middens and remains found inside and nearby the caves and other sites contain the remains of much smaller prey: duck, goose, game birds, song birds, and other small fowl in bulk alongside pack mammals such as small deer and goat (Gifford-Gonzalez, 1991; Brittain and Overton, 2013; Overton and Hamilakis, 2013). Indeed the predominant source of protein bird meat in the Palaeolithic era was grouse (Guminski, 2005). Migrating and nesting patterns of waders and songbirds in their millions were the target of hunting populations from the Palaeolithic to the late Mesolithic eras. How humans move with the migrations and rhythms of species is a relatively recent area of study that proposes a more integrated approach to understanding the archaeological stress of the human-animal hyphen. Instead of focusing on the traditional theories of the emancipation of humanity from its animality, recent archaeological studies propose a closer analysis on human and animal behaviours that are in fact bound together across spatial, material and coevolutionary time. Instead of always being read as a passive resource of raw calorific yields, some scholars propose a dynamic of *intra*-action in human and animal social assemblies where merging conceptual boundaries of influence begin to blur the terms ‘domination’ and ‘dependence’ (Ingold, 2012). For example, studies of swan

migrations and their integrations with hunter populations in palaeocultures show that the balance of influence is clearly determined by the movements and behavioural intentions of the whooper swan and subsequently reflected in the desires of the hunter. The benefits of following and understanding the lifeworld of this large bird clearly impacted on social practices of the hunters that went beyond a mere source of protein. The remains of swan bodies are found outside of middens and appear as aestheticized and ritualized material such as in the burial of a child on a swan's wing and the earliest known musical flutes made of swan bones (Brittain and Overton, 142). Indeed the larger the bird the less likely it appears in archaeological surveys of animal-as-food bones deposits. This could be for reasons of taste (eagles are tasteless) and availability (duck eggs are plentiful). As the aurochs and cave bears that are represented visually and unilaterally as charismatic mega-fauna to be revered, their rendered bones are notably absent from the occupied caves. In contrast, birds of prey, eagles, swans and other less easily digestible avifauna consistently appear in more rendered contexts as ritualized or aestheticized figures within funereal or musicological contexts, alongside all the other minor mammals that do not feature in the gastrobiography of human evolution. The archaeological swan becomes a performance animal, its leg bone sounding a song while a dead child is delivered on its wing to the next imagined lifeworld. Meanwhile the mounds of thousands of songbird bodies which escalate in midden dugouts across contemporary north western European archaeological projects continually deliver evidence of animal hunting social practice that presents a rather different image to the lone male hunter overcoming the great beast (Guminski, 2005). In the shade of these discoveries the long-perpetuated image of the lone pre-lingual initiated man with his spear in front of the painted sign of the animal on the cave wall, contemplating his

pursuit of the bison or auroch is weakened. Montelle's suggests that these 'galleries' must have been sites of theatrical activity, for palaeoperformance. I further argue that a more open, less gendered, speculation on the decorative, domestic and even casual aspects of how the caves were used (for eating, sleeping and living and dying) allows us to move away from the initiatory secret rituals of boys to men and of conquering large animals, or what Derrida might call a 'carnophallogocentric' assumption in front of this enigmatic parietal iconography. While Derrida is sure that 'no one will contest that in most overwhelming phenomenal form, from hunt to bullfight, from mythologies to abattoirs, except for rare exceptions it is the male that goes after the animal,' his term for this form - carnophallogocentrism - is there to be deconstructed in new ways that suggest that while the man was at the centre 'establishing his dominion over the beasts,' others were devising creative and diverse extensions of that dominion with what was left over.<sup>75</sup>

Acoustics and architectonics in palaeoculture are always entangled with animal rendition, ingestion, fetishization and zoomusicological instrumentation. My specific interest in bringing into focus the phenomenon of animal-based musical instruments that emerge out of the zooarchaeological histories from the Upper Palaeolithic is because of their specific acoustic and acousmatic qualities inside human spatial, temporal and territorial hunting practices of then and now. The mapping of the cave chambers has been inflected by their sound producing qualities and the differences in acoustics and spatiality directly in relation to the paintings and drawings, such as the 'Hall of the Bison', the 'Chamber of the Bears' and so on (Chauvet, 1996). Scholars speculate and differ over the functions of the sound-art relationships in these

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<sup>75</sup> Derrida, J. (2008) *The Animal that Therefore I am*. New York: Fordham University Press. P104

contexts but agree that the sounds produced in what Montelle calls 'palaeoperformance' are almost certainly acousmatic in nature.<sup>76</sup> In the dim torchlight or darkness of the deep interior of these caves any audible sound is altered and accentuated. Sound archaeologists have concluded that the performance of the instruments was carried out in secret, smaller chambers, hidden from 'initiates' or any audience that were present. In some contemporary cultures that inspire these speculations, even the sight or knowledge of the instruments to the uninitiated (usually women and children) could result in punishment by death. The source of the ritual sound, especially the bull-roarer, must remain hidden, and perhaps this is simply because of the power of its acousmatic effect. Power and its sources must always be protected in any community, not least in hunter-gatherer societies (Dundes, 1976). Whether the Palaeolithic ritual/performance was deliberately and directly connected to hunting animals we can never know. We do know that these people hunted some animals for food and made instruments with the remains.

### **Becoming Acoustic.**

Within the spectrum of findings on prehistoric sound possibilities that have been developed and fabulated in diverse and interesting ways across archeological and ethnomusicological studies, the proliferation of animal matter and rendition in the production of art-sound is substantial (Lawergren, 1998; Gray, P.M., Krause, B., Atema, J., Payne, R., Krumhansl, C. & Baptista, L., 2001). The bull-roarer alone appears in hundreds of sites and in its plain flat oval bone shape and simple dynamics of rotating string it transcends time by consistently turning up in contemporary

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<sup>76</sup> Montelle, Y. (2009) *Palaeoperformance: The Emergence of Theatricality as Social Practice*. Calcutta: Seagull Books.

indigenous and aboriginal cultures. I am more drawn to the wide variety of whistles and flutes (aereophones) made from the hollowed out unulas of birds that span all aspects of palaeocultural production. Indeed, in Montelle's broad survey it is the finer points of difference between a bone whistle and a bone flute that has drawn my attention into this palaeocultural 'point of origin' and I wish to expand on these differences here for a moment. Increasing interest in recent years in the acoustic dimension of Palaeolithic cave sites has produced more analysis and appreciation for the qualities and differences between whistles and flutes made of animal bone that are found in large quantities in all locations across Europe (Dauvois, 2002, cited in Montelle). The whistles (or *aerophones*) are invariably simply knuckle bones and short stout bones with one perforation. With one finger covering the air hole, the whistle-blower can produce a wide variety of shrill sound up to four thousand Hertz. In Michel Dauvois' field tests with contemporary examples of bone whistles from First Nations peoples in Canada (the Mackenzie) the effect on reindeer was remarkably effective. Curious to find the source of the sound the animals become entranced and approach closer, losing their defenses and even lie down in a trusting state, and easily affording the hunter his quarry (Dauvois, 2002). Montelle calls this phenomenon a 'rupturing of the soundscape with artificial tones' where the acousmatics performed with the hunting whistle are more likely intended for the animal's ears alone.<sup>77</sup>

The excavation of the first bone flutes (with two or more perforations) radically altered perception of the activities of these peoples. When the flutes appear with several exactly positioned perforations in the longer leg bones of swans, eagles and

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, Montelle, p120

vultures, a performing figure emerges from the perfunctory hunting-gathering milieu and begins to animate this enigmatic period in completely new ways (Kunej, B and Turk, I., 2000). Flutes of bird bone produce precise melodic scales and artificial tones which massively expand the sonic spectrum of the Upper Palaeolithic in the first instance and increase speculation into the emergence in this era of theatricality (or theatre-without-words). The overall sound produced by these early instruments is clearly more abstract than a mere copying of natural sounds or imitation of animal acoustics for hunting or even amusement, the 'mimesis' in cultural imitations of nature (Taussig, 1993).

While the whistle is clear in its usefulness to hunting, the actual purpose of the sound of the flute is only barely decipherable. We can speculate on the meanings that the sounding out of the bird-bone meant for the musicians of the Upper Palaeolithic through the sound echo we hear in living hunter-gatherer cultures today. In these environments the connection between the instruments and renditions of the animal-hunter-artist triad are plain to see and record as they exist only alongside each other and because of each other. The 'ecological aesthetic' (Toadvine, 2010) inside this expansion of the relationship of humans to animals in early societies, which has long been defined exclusively through economies of rendition, calorific bounty and narratives of dominance, into relatively recent notions of interspecies participation and significance, I believe begins with the intentional carving of a swan's bone flute.

In recent studies of prehistoric cultures the re-imagining of human-animal relations as a co-production of social worlds (Orton, 2010), exhibiting porous boundaries of social action and concepts of personhood among species (Armstrong Oma, K., 2010),

has done much in archaeological research to dissolve the long established and divisive human-animal hyphen. Instead it is these precious though numerous material artifacts, such as the whistle and flute that, through their acoustic artificiality, reveal a wealth of connections between the hunter and the animal and now the performer in multiple spatial arrangements of caves, shelters and other domains. The spatio-temporal aspect of these studies takes into account not only the movement of the hunter but now also the simultaneous movements, rhythms, pathways and behaviours of the hunted. For example, evidence of the hunting of the whooper swan in landmark zooarchaeological excavations in prehistoric sites around Aggersund, North Jutland has been interpreted as testaments not only to the social value of these migratory birds but also how their diurnal feeding rhythms, roosting sites, seasonal adaptability and other fluctuations were profoundly synchronized with the rhythms and movements of the Mesolithic people who came to depend on them (Overton and Hamilakis, 2013). In Brittain and Overton's analysis, it is because the whooper swan's migratory pattern to Aggersund is the same today as it was in 4000 BC that the early human practices of anticipation, journeying, preparation, rendition and ritualization of the swan, which extends far beyond mere chase and kill, can be revealed once an interspecies approach is central to the enquiry. While today's ornithological, biological and geographical knowledge of whooper swan migration and behavior is not compatible with Palaeolithic worldviews, archaeologists now appreciate a far richer 'synchronicity...of the hunt across paths and places, through a sensory field of varying times, light, temperatures, and weather extremes, simultaneously disclosing situated boundaries of alterity' which are also fluid, cohabitational and above all *intra*-active where 'the significance of Otherness is



situated against the alignment of tempo, place, and practice'.<sup>78</sup> This intra-action in human-animal participation histories emphasizes the nature of boundaries-to-come or to emerge within material configurations and assemblages of human-animal engagements. Boundaries between species can be contested, embodied, transformed and fluidly renegotiated when our approach is open to narratives that involve the dynamics of living-with and becoming-with animals (Haraway, 2008).

### **Hunting and Acoustic Territorialization.**

In his anthropological accounts of his experiences with foxhunting, Garry Marvin describes 'the performance of hunting - often continued for hundreds of years' where a territory acquires 'a set of sensual and experiential qualities that become enriched with each hunting event. The memories are of what has or has not happened before: the present excitement is one of potential, what might occur and what experience it will generate.'<sup>79</sup> The territory Marvin is talking about is the English countryside where generations of hunting practices (since at least the medieval ages), specifically the foxhunt, have '*converted* the countryside into another space...a sacred space of deep emotional significance and social and cultural resonance.'<sup>80</sup> To be a good hunter means being an excellent listener. Hunting, according to Marvin, is a 'fully embodied, multi-sensory and multi-sensual practice that depends on an immersion into a multi-

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<sup>78</sup> Brittain, M. & Overton, N. (2013) The significance of others: A prehistory of rhythm and interspecies participation. *Society & Animals*. 21(2) p145

<sup>79</sup> Garry Marvin (2000), Natural Instincts and Cultural Passions transformations and Performances in Foxhunting', *Performance Research*, 5(2): 108-115

<sup>80</sup> Garry Marvin (2003) 'A passionate pursuit: foxhunting as performance' in Bronislaw Szerszynski, Wallace Heim and Claire Waterton (eds), *Sociological Review Monograph Series: Nature Performed: Environment, Culture and Performance*, October 2003, Volume 51, Issue Supplement s2, Pages vii-vii, 1-226, pp48-60. Emphasis added.

sensory and multi-sensual world.’<sup>81</sup> In his essays on foxhunting as ‘a highly complex ritual, ceremonial, performative event’ he focuses on ‘the immediacy and the experience of hunting rather than an exploration of its social and cultural meaning.’<sup>82</sup> In the sensorial immersive experience of the mounted foxhunter, ‘presence is fundamental’ where ‘the Hunt openly and deliberately announces itself to the countryside...connecting human and animal bodies...and dramatically enacts a set of relationships with the natural world.’<sup>83</sup> When following my local Hunt in Tipperary across familiar territories, even stretches of pasture that I may pass everyday, I have had the experience of momentarily being unsure where I was when witnessing and following the hounds’ *version* of the landscape. The hounds are central to the entire event, and their acoustics are what announce the performance and the performing of the landscape. Marvin describes the ‘voice’ of the hounds in great detail as follows:

As soon as a hound picks up the scent of the fox, it should signal this to the other members of the pack through its cries – a hound must be able to communicate. As more and more hounds find the scent the cries intensify and are interpreted by the human participants as a commentary on the developing relationship between the hounds and the fox. This cry is not merely a utilitarian signaling device; it is an important aesthetic element, and breeders hope to produce a complex set of voices and harmonious sound within the pack. Hounds are regarded as having bass, tenor, alto, or soprano voices, and these should be well represented. A mute hound – one who is unwilling or unable to use this quality of canine sound – is incomplete. The

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<sup>81</sup> Garry Marvin, (2005) ‘Sensing Nature: Encountering the world in Hunting’ in *Etnofoor*, Vol.18, No.1. pp 15-26.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., Garry Marvin, (2005) p15

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., Marvin (2003) p48.

collective sound of the pack when hunting is referred to as *speaking*, and this sound is both appreciated and responded to aesthetically. Not only should the hounds' cries have content which communicates a message, but the sound, purely as sound should have a quality which is registered by referring to it as "the music of the hounds." A simple set of canine sounds are transformed in the imagination of the human listener – the natural becomes cultural.<sup>84</sup>

The keenest listener here is perhaps the Huntsman himself who must interpret this hound-music in order for the natural to become cultural and for his cultural 'equipment' to be accepted into natural laws: he is 'the catalyst of the relationship between the central animal performers.'<sup>85</sup> The Huntsman and his hounds form 'an *ensemble* linked by mutual purpose, understanding and feeling...(the hounds) are hunting with and for the Huntsman'<sup>86</sup>

In this fox-hunter-hound-spectator quadrangle the hound-music and the Huntsman's horn are the 'threads' that connect all four entities across the various zones of proximity in which each 'actor' follows through his or her role or position. Marvin says 'this is performance defined as practical achievement but it is also one that allows a more evocative accomplishment to emerge'<sup>87</sup> For this kind of performance to be fully realized, the engagement with the hunt must be total and this necessitates a high degree of emotional connection between all its participants and the natural world in which they are immersed.

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<sup>84</sup> Garry Marvin (2002), 'Unspeakability, Inedibility, and the Structures of Pursuit in the English Foxhunt' in Nigel Rothfels (ed), *Representing Animals*. Bloomington; Indiana University Press. P139-158 pp147

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., Marvin (2003) p57.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p58

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p59

The landscape, the lives lived on it and within it, and contained and constituted by it, are the foundation for this deep connectivity upon which the 'cultural performance' of the foxhunt depends. It is the life lived in this environment, Marvin says, that informs the 'condensed, distilled, concentrated' actions of the foxhunt that are related but distinct from everyday life.<sup>88</sup> This can certainly be claimed for the bird-hunter who, unlike the occasional sighting or scent of a fox for the Huntsman, is listening to his prey from first light, surrounded by the acoustic presence of the birds throughout the day, negotiating and anticipating proximities of performance and intra-action in both his world and the world of the bird.

Like the hunter and the bird catcher, who must always 'give themselves to *being* in the countryside in a more intense, aware, responsive way than they normally would' these actions suggest an understanding of the structure of experience that Heidegger termed the phenomenon of *Da-sein*, of being-there.<sup>89</sup> Animals do have an understanding of their world, according to Heidegger, but it is limited, encircled, 'ringed' and not open to transcendence like the human *Dasein*. Humans may enter an awareness of the experience of other beings like animals but this is not a two-way path. Animals cannot leave their sphere of awareness. The lack or 'poverty' of the animal's world, according to Heidegger, is that it cannot escape its own sphere of experience, its *Umwelt*. Human experience however is not limited to just one's own awareness of being-there (*da-sein*) but also to being-with (*mit-sein*), the experience of

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., Marvin (2003) p58

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., (2003) p59

being in close, bonded relations with an other of one's own kind and thirdly to *dabeisein*, being-there-with or being-alongside.<sup>90</sup>

For example, in one of Seamus Heaney's later poems *The Blackbird of Glanmore*, a startled bird startles the poet into self-awareness and 'for a second / I've a bird's eye view of myself, / A shadow on raked gravel / In front of my house of life.'<sup>91</sup> The nervous blackbird is both aware and at a distance, but for Heaney it is a constant familiar. He says 'I am absolute for you' and Heaney 'loves' the bird for always seeing him in the same way, even though life has altered the poet so greatly. The bird also remains 'absolute' for Heaney, always 'On the grass when I arrive...In the ivy when I leave.'<sup>92</sup> This is the refrain. The Blackbird and the poet are always *dabeisein*, being-there-with, in view of themselves in relation to each other, *going-along-with* the other's world and at certain moments, at least from the poet's perspective, the experience of life is all the richer for 'letting something be involved'<sup>93</sup> or 'Being-alongside it spatially.'<sup>94</sup> Being-alongside is always a doubling of some kind whether spatial, visual, and experiential. It is this doubling or multiplying of perception that I think can be useful in determining what is at stake in the forest or theatre and in general for the artist. The ability to look both ways and understand but stay independent of one's quarry is what sets the huntsman apart from his fellow riders,

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<sup>90</sup> In John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson's translation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, they explain *dabeisein* as 'to be there alongside' or 'to be at *that* place' but I would also add that it can be more participatory; to be in a state-of-participation-with, to be in the mix; *Ich bin dabei* – I'm in with that, I am on for that, I am with you in that project or simply I-am-being-there-with. *We are both at the same event but "we" are not an event*. Most crucial I think, is the precise perspective that Heidegger describes is held in *Dabeisein*, in 'being-alongside' as that 'which is absorbed in its world speaks not towards itself but away from itself towards the 'yonder' of something circumspectively ready-to-hand; yet it still has *itself* in view in its existential spatiality.

<sup>91</sup> Seamus Heaney (2006) *District and Circle*, Faber and Faber: London. p75

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, Heaney, p75

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, Heidegger (1962) p117

<sup>94</sup> Martin Heidegger (1962), *Being and Time*, Trans Macquarrie, J and Robinson. E., Harper Collins: New York. p156

or what allows the bird-catcher to get so close in song to the blackbird without losing sight of his goal. It is also, I argue, what propels the artist Cattivelli to get so close to the bird-catcher, the *chioccolatoro*, to share the same performance space with him while remaining very separate in the production of her work. Where is the animal acoustic in her soundscapes located precisely? Is it more a *dabeisein*, a being-alongside? When we come to Cattivelli's performance titled *UIT* (2013), which ends with the *chioccolatori*'s virtuoso warbling, her curiosity with being and becoming bird-*like* is the over-arching theme of the work and it begins with the question: what does it mean to sound like a bird? What does becoming-bird sound like? In the case studies that follow I will show how Cattivelli's work with these bird-singers in particular overcomes Roach's risk of death in the performance of memory and invention.

### ***UIT* and other adventures in acoustics.**

In the work of Cattivelli and the *Chioccolatori* that frames this chapter, I find a door to access the complex pre-historical relationships involved in interspecies participation where the aesthetics and realities of hunting practices are tied to traditions and tensions of otherness and survival. The challenges that these traditional practices present specifically when they are incorporated into contemporary performance contexts can echo across disciplines such as zooarchaeology, by both listening to the findings of others and reflecting on who or what counts as an actor in the production of acoustic territories. In the detailed analysis which follows I examine a number of works by Cattivelli that not only connect with the acousmatic pasts I have described and analyzed but may also signal a present engagement with creaturely acoustics that

moves beyond novelty and curiosity in order to contribute more thoughtfully to the debate as to how artists and animals might come together now in culture.

Prior to their work with Forsythe in *Birds, Bonn 1964* in the German pavilion, the *chioccolatori*, specifically Prosdocimo and Rizzo, performed a similar choreography for the American artist Pae White for her installation in the Arsenale in Venice in 2009.<sup>95</sup> White proposed that the thirteenth century warehouse, where her installation of string sculptures and chandeliers was exhibited, would be complimented with a sound from the medieval tradition of the *chioccolo*. The warbling men moved through the installation, discreetly singing to each other in a similar manner to the German pavilion. Previous to these incarnations, my first encounter with the phenomenon of the *chioccolatori* was in a public library in Tipperary, Ireland where they appeared on small screens in Janet Mularney's installation *Cortocircuitio* (2006). In these works by Mularney and White the skills of the warblers and the histories of their sound are allowed to slide more towards kitsch, because the inclusion of the animal voice is, more than anything, entertaining. The problem lies in these artists presenting the *Chioccolatori* as folk novelties picked up from the rustic world. Mularney goes so far as to say the men were 'waiting' for her camera when she first 'discovered' them in the late eighties.<sup>96</sup> By coaxing the *Chioccolatori* into their performance spaces with vague reasoning beyond their exotic allure, Mularney and White and perhaps even Forsythe, ultimately reveal the limit of

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<sup>95</sup> Pae White *Making worlds* 2009. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8axNSdBnL1c>. Accessed 07 June, 2014

<sup>96</sup> Note from the artist: "The first time I came across these amazing performers was in Terranuova Braccioloni, Arezzo, Italy in 1988. Over the years they crystalized in my mind, bringing into focus a new significance, waiting to be videoed in 2005 at the same fair. This was the 391<sup>st</sup> year of this competing of *Chioccolatori* (sic)." In Shaffrey, C. Through a glass darkly. *Irish Arts Review* (2002-). 27(3) pp.78-81. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20789388> .

their engagement with the potential layering of histories, animals, meanings and metaphors that are *already* at work in the actions of the warbling men.

In contrast to these casual dialogues with bird song and bird hunting, Cattivelli stands at her laptop in a large blue room at the Museo d'Arte Moderna in Bologna with a metal disc in her mouth and a variety of flutes and whistles beside her. She produces a soundscape with these tools that is insect-like, then like rain, then like techno-static-interference, then like sustained church organ chords. She raises her face up to make bird sounds through the metal object between her teeth - 'UIT UITIT UITRU TITRU TITITRU TUT'- while blending and reforming the sounds from the laptop. As her performance draws to a close, two men, Rizzo and Prosdocimo enter the circular arena that the standing audience have created around Cattivelli and her actions end as theirs begin. There is a clear separation between the two, signaled by a lighting change. Cattivelli does not hide the 'surprise' of the source of the sound at all. Rizzo and Prosdocimo stride into the room, face the audience, gesture to them and whistle and call to each other. The only acousmatic element that remains secret here is the reed instruments in the *chioccolatori's* mouths. It is clear that they delight in the illusion they are creating, flapping their arms a little and making tiny quick head movements without giving away the source of their skill. In contrast to Cattivelli's open display of the instruments throughout her performance, the *chioccolatori* are experienced performers and sorcerers of *their* illusion. They know that the reeds must remain hidden in order for the magic trick to work. Concealment, acousmatics and ventriloquism are all essential to the origins and success of their artistry.



Cattivelli devised this piece titled *UIT* for the Live Arts Week in Bologna (April, 2013) and invited Prosdocimo and Rizzo to participate in her event. The *chioccolatoro* is an illusionist on several levels. His high pitch belies his heavy physique, his 'skill' is hidden in the reed in his mouth, and the mimicry of the bird is not for our acoustic pleasure but a skill of hunting. The delight in encountering this *chioccolatoro* at a fair or in an installation is in his animated interpretation of what a bird sounds like, of what it might be like to sound like a bird. However the history of his skill is motivated by a desire to know what it might be like to *eat* a bird. As I recounted earlier, Rizzo and Prosdocimo make many more appearances at hunting trade fairs and local food festivals than they do at performance art events. In the context of the local festival, the applause for the performing warbler-men can be read as both an acknowledgement of their hunting skill and its long history and also of the graceful Italian ease with which the Renaissance, Religion, Art, Life and Death can come together in a blackbird pie. In spite of the opposition and controversy that accompanies the tradition, it is the convergence of skill, potency, poetry and timeless actions that the *Chioccolatori* embody that I suggest that some artists engaging the warblers in performance installations actually desire to be demonstrated in their own work, borrowing the aesthetic qualities without any of the mess of slaughter.

In Cattivelli's engagement with the tradition of *chioccolo*, she plumbs deeper into the subject and her work is strengthened as a result. Cattivelli uses the term 'sound capture' and interprets the *chioccolo* as 'sound bait'. In *UIT*, she says she takes the hunting skills of the *chioccolo* only as a starting point to 'pursue the idea of a 'sound

trap' that plays with falsification and deception.'<sup>97</sup> In these sound works, the artist is fully aware of how she is drawn to these 'somehow dreadful' musical instruments and the range of sounds they can produce from the breath alone. But she also recognizes that this 'blowing' is not enough. The birds may be tricked into a position where the hunter is waiting for them but only if the hunter knows 'what every bird song sounds like in all its nuances. Bird call players can be considered then as virtuosi, for they have to know and to be able to reproduce the different calls the birds sing in different situations: when they are eating, when they are mating, when the place is safe or dangerous.'<sup>98</sup> It is important to note that Cattivelli understands the complexities of skill involved in *chiccolo* practices and there is nothing casual about their inclusion in her performance. She has considered and understood her sound sources entirely and then she has created substantial compositions with her own interpretation and use of the *chioccolo* instruments. She is clear that her interest is in extracting the strategies of sound production, mimetic acoustic techniques, sound transfiguration, instrumental procedures, syllabic sequences and the building of 'a new vocabulary of sounds, a fake language, which is the fabric of an artificial soundscape open and available to incursions that broaden the sound grid'<sup>99</sup> As is clear from her other compositions and explorations in sound art, she is first and foremost a musician with expertise in industrial and high contemporary music, electro-acoustic instrumentation, improvised music and music for theatre. In her own performance section of *UIT*, she delivers the sounds from her standing position at the laptop without physical gesture or mimicry but by allowing the sound to take primary position in the performance. Her own performing body appears neutral: central but

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<sup>97</sup> Cattivelli (2013) <http://www.danielacattivelli.it/uit/>. Accessed 13 November 2013

<sup>98</sup> Daniela Cattivelli, *Garrulus Glandarius* <http://vimeo.com/4590936>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., Cattivelli. 2013.

with minimal expressiveness. Instead she allows the bird sounds and abstract recordings and distortions to become her 'assemblage of independent blocks' of modular sound design. The compositional intention she states, 'is a rethinking of the methods and techniques' of the Chioccolatori.<sup>100</sup>

Why then does she involve Rizzo and Prosdocimo at all? Indeed in a second performance of *UIT* in the Muséum de Toulouse (October 2013) the two men travelled with the production and appear again at the end of the piece, enchanting the unsuspecting audience with their 'surprise.'<sup>101</sup> I suggest that there is something at work in the practice of the Chioccolatori that only their own performance can produce and that Cattivelli wants as part of hers. As performers, the Chioccolatori are certainly not what they first seem (men who can sing like birds) and the deceptions and tricks attached to both their performance and their hunting practices certainly stand in marked contrast to the context of the gallery or stage. Even though Cattivelli does not draw attention to the gender differences in *UIT* and other performances she has made with *chioccolatori*, there is a striking contrast between the heavy men and the slight figure of the artist herself. Certainly putting a woman-as-bird on stage has a long and diverse history and it is a temptation to project a feminist perspective on to Cattivelli's *UIT*, if only to illustrate how it departs from the trope of soprano/bird. Adriana Cavarero writes that female vocal figures – 'from Sirens to muses, from Echo to opera singers'- provide a crucial counter-history to the evasion of the individual

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Cattivelli's second performance of *UIT*, at the Festival La Novela in the Jardin botanique Henri Gaussen, Muséum de Toulouse was advertised thus: "Let yourself embark on an exotic soundscape. An experience that promises surprises!" ("*Laissez-vous embarquer dans un environnement sonore dépayasant. Une expérience qui promet des surprises!*"). <http://www.fete-connaissance.fr/uit>. Accessed Sunday June 8th, 2014

embodied female voice by reconstructing a 'politics of the voice' reinstating the uniqueness of 'who is speaking.'<sup>102</sup> For Cavarero, 'myth is full of female vocal creatures' and I perceive none more relevant in this context than the Attic myth of the Sirens.<sup>103</sup>

Unlike staged operatic bird-women such as Wagner's Woodland Bird in *Siegfried* (1876) or Walther Braunfels' Nightingale in his opera *Die Vögel* (1920), based on Aristophanes' *Birds* (414 BC), I would position Cattivelli's persona in her performance closer to the Sirens of the myth of Odysseus, as in-between creatures, birds of prey with a woman's head and chest, part of a pack or flock on their own island and identified by the actions caused by their singing. The Sirens function is enclosed, total – the luring of prey through singing – not in order to seduce men but simply to hunt by singing, to eat, to nourish themselves, to live. Their island is made of bones and rotting flesh but in Jane Ellen Harrison's description, 'horror is kept in the background, seduction to the fore.'<sup>104</sup> Harrison's own early feminist reading of the myth is frank and poetic at the same time. However sweet the Sirens singing may sound to a passing Greek demi-god 'the end of that song is death.'<sup>105</sup> For her, the song of the Siren (there were usually only between two and three sirens on the island) is closely associated with pure living and dying and has only a passing relationship with gender. Becoming-siren and singing is a means to an end, a method of survival. In ritual, in Greek drama and in contemporary sound art, it is important to choose the right *species* for being, becoming and becoming-alongside in order to get the artist

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<sup>102</sup> Adriana Cavarero (2005) *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, California: Stanford University Press

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., Cavarero, p165

<sup>104</sup> Harrison, Jane Ellen, 1850-1928. (1908) *Prolegomena to the study of Greek religion*. Cambridge University Press, 1908 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (OCoLC)647433324. Accessed 15,June,2014, p199

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., Harrison, p199

through the struggle of production. In Deleuze and Guattari's theory of becoming-animal as another way of thinking about being, they suggest changing our perception of life as a stable, partial or moralizing perspective and instead thinking of becoming as a freedom from seeing ourselves as detached from life and nature. In becoming-animal we can begin to perceive the forces and powers of life that we are always in zones of proximity with. Leonard Lawlor recommends becoming-rat as an excellent method of getting underneath the world of literature and creating 'a new syntax of gnashing' where 'writing like a rat would be a writing that struggles to escape from the dominant forms of expression.'<sup>106</sup> I suggest that Cattivelli does this by becoming-jay.

After creating *UIT* with the performance of the Chioccolatori and other theatrical elements, Cattivelli stripped the work down to its core with just her own performance with her laptop and her whistling instruments. She performed this new version (*estratto* or extract) under the title *Garrulus glandarius* (2013), the latin name for the Eurasian jay.<sup>107</sup> Cattivelli chooses this bird to interpret and does not reach for the many hundreds of whistles and reeds available to her. Cattivelli breaks the rules of Choccolatoria by honouring the jay with a new composition and dishonouring the traditions of the bird hunters. The bird does not have a chioccolo hunting whistle made for it, as it remains a boundary bird and hated by the hunting fraternity. The jay or "Wood Watcher" is the intermediary between each chioccolatore and his quarry or between the passerines and whatever is not *for* them in their world: fanciful, shy and

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<sup>106</sup> Leonard Lawlor (2008), 'Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari' in *SubStance*, Issue 117 (Volume 37, Number 3), University of Wisconsin Press. pp169-187

<sup>107</sup> 5 giugno 2013 h. 22.00 e 6 giugno 2013 h 20.45 | Angelo Mai Italia Tropici, viale delle Terme di Caracalla 55a Roma *Garrulus glandarius*, concerto per laptop e bird calls (estratto da *UIT*) di Daniela Cattivelli

loud, this observant bird is the ideal bird-becoming for the artist, Cattivelli. The jay is constitutively interstitial, with the ability through impersonation - losing the person - to become other-than jay, watching the behavior on all sides and in its way, fair. Anything unusual is reported. It is up to the residents and visitors alike to negotiate how they choose to respond to the alert.

In *Garrulus glandarius*, Cattivelli creates a new soundscape for the Jay with existing chioccolo instruments. In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms she has successfully transcended both oedipalised power structures (of the chioccolatorio) and other perceivable carnophallogocentrisms by becoming-jay. I would argue that her attraction/repulsion to activities of concealments in the 'art of the chioccolo' are crucial to her choice of bird to become-alongside. The jay is already an interstitial creature sounding warnings and listening attentively for danger in the worlds of both animal and human. By creating a new sound and a new creative event that is not imitation, one that is never the same and that changes with each performance, Cattivelli achieves an expression of the state of both becoming-animal and becoming-alongside. Cattivelli fully embraces the artificiality and trickery of her techniques by 'changing, damaging, falsifying syllabic sequences' to create 'a fake language which is the fabric of an artificial soundscape.'<sup>108</sup> She is 'botching' the sound of becoming-animal by disturbing its accuracy.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Cattivelli (2013) <http://www.danielacattivelli.it/uit/>. Accessed 13 November 2013

<sup>109</sup> In the next chapter I will expand further on this term "botching" which was first used by Deleuze and Guattari and expanded on by Steve Baker in his book *The Postmodern Animal* (2000) to describe how some contemporary artists have usurped the traditional figure of the animal in visual arts practices.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., Cattivelli (2013)

As a musician working in depth with birdsong and bird behaviour, Cattivelli has a tenuous connection with the practices of Messiaen and his 'walk in the woods' method of becoming-bird/ becoming-artist (as described in my previous chapter). Her interpretations display a broader appreciation of the life of the bird and its entanglements with human society and not just its aesthetic or musical values. But while doing so she still directly acknowledges Messiaen by calling her activity 'an effort to rebuild a sound environment that reproduces the acousmatic experience of *a walk in the woods*, of the disorientation experienced due to the perception of sounds to which one is unable to attribute a concrete physical source.'<sup>110</sup> In *Garrulus glandarius*, Cattivelli is clearly 'botching' the material voice of the bird and instead merges it into her own interest in sound technology and composition, without any sentiment for the bird sound itself. She delivers a charged and confronting sound work that reveals its ornithological sources through building and repeating sound cycles, turning over and over on its own vocabulary. Cattivelli uses the term 'jamming' to describe her interference or manipulation of sound. For her the word alludes to both music and resistance. She explains 'Jamming' as 'the act of intentionally disrupting radio communications in such a way that decreases the signal / noise ratio. It is carried out by transmitting on the same frequency and with the same modulation of the signal you want to hide.'<sup>111</sup> As a method of both censorship and confusion, jamming is used on all sides during conflict: to interrupt information, to warn the enemy, to sabotage communication systems. She is also making a musical reference to jamming in musical terms by using improvisation, leaving the score, and departing from the canon. Alphonso Lingis surmises that 'all

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., Cattivelli (2013) <http://www.danielacattivelli.it/uit/>.

these stammerings, exclamations, slurrings, murmurs, rumblings, cooings, and laughter, all this noise we make when we are together makes it possible to view us as struggling together, to jam the unequivocal voice of the outsider.’<sup>112</sup> Cattivelli achieves all this in *Garrulus glandarius* without the need for the performance of Chioccolatori. For Lingis, and maybe for Cattivelli, ‘to live is to echo the vibrancy of things. To be, for material things, is to resonate.’<sup>113</sup> In the simplicity of *Garrulus glandarius* she opens up her practice as a composer and musician to a sense of play and experimentation. As spectators and listeners we are invited into an acousmatic experience of being and becoming-alongside, and reminded that we are eternally listening and calling, hearkening and responding to acoustic animal worlds.

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<sup>112</sup> Lingis, A. (1994) *The Community of those Who have Nothing in Common*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p96

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., Lingis p96



### **Chapter Three.**

#### **Becoming Botched: Play, tactical empathy and neo-shamanic acoustic legacies in performance.**

*A mighty magic comes alive as death animates things.*

Michael Taussig

When the community of Stavanger in Norway invited the English artist Marcus Coates to come and stay in their city, their openness to his shamanistic practices, his incidental street performances and his predilection for wearing taxidermied animal bodies was rewarded with the complex, emotive work titled *Radio Shaman* (2006). Before his residency in Stavanger Coates had begun to stage a series of relational performance events and social interventions that were informed by his interest in shamanism and its connections with live art and also in his questioning of the meaning of the role of an artist in a community in general. In order to find a method of combining his interests in archaic ritual practices, his extensive knowledge of ornithology and the becoming-animal theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Coates attended a weekend course in Shamanic practice in Notting Hill Gate in London where he lives and works. He found that he could apply his knowledge of British bird life and general wild life acoustics in his attempt to access other worlds populated by animal spirits, thus giving him the means to receive and interpret any messages on

his 'journey to the Lower World.'<sup>114</sup> Coates is fully aware of the potential incongruities of positioning part-time shamanism, human-animal studies and urban socio-cultural politics alongside each other in highly risky community-based live art projects. I suggest that it is precisely these tensions and seeming incompatibilities that can produce a radical rethinking of how the animal is encountered in the praxis of performance. In this chapter, through a reading of Coates I will explore the tactical empathic techniques of the hunter/performer alongside those of the shaman in circumpolar Northern communities and the aesthetic and performative legacies of these practices. I look at how shamanism, schizophrenia and becoming-animal in Deleuzeo-Guattarian explorations of personhood are tested in the work of Coates and his predecessor in art/shamanism Joseph Beuys, where multiplicities of selfhood, personhood, mimesis and magical alterity are tied to the material values of creatural acoustics.

### **Stavanger.**

During his artist-in-residency period in Stavanger in Norway, Marcus Coates asked community groups and the people of the town generally what issues or problems concerned them, in order for him to make some helpful action that might affect a positive change. More than any other issue, the community was concerned about the increasing presence and the welfare of the immigrant Nigerian working as prostitutes in Stavanger. In response Coates chose three sites where he would perform a ritual action in order to seek answers for this question. Wearing a black suit and tie, a

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<sup>114</sup> Coates, M., (2005) *Journey to the Lower World*: a shamanic performance by Marcus Coates after a traditional Siberian Yakut ritual for the residents of Sheil Park, Liverpool, in January 2003. Platform Projects; Morning Star, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. No page numbers.

taxidermied deer skin with full head and antlers and holding a taxidermied hare while the head of another hare protruded from his chest, Coates went into a shamanic trance in the cathedral, in the civic offices of the local authority and on the street corners where the Nigerian women worked at night. In the filmed recordings of these performances Coates moves about calmly pausing with eyes closed and then emits the sound of whatever spirit animal he is encountering in his quest down to the Lower World. From the deep intensity of his standing still position he suddenly and loudly imitates the cries of a stag (“oargghh oargghh oargghh”), then a sparrowhawk (“kek kek kek kek kek kek kek kek”) then a red grouse (“dug dug adug aduga duga dugadadadadadug”).<sup>115</sup> Over the course of repeated trances the image of a young seal becomes a recurring vision to the artist. The seal pup is stranded on the rocks and its parents are swimming nearby. If Coates goes to help it, it will bite. Coates says ‘I wanted to help but it didn’t understand the complexity of the issue.’<sup>116</sup> Instead Coates returns from his shamanic journey and reveals his findings live on local radio through an interpreter and DJ. At the DJ’s request people telephone the radio station to discuss the issues with Coates following his findings. In response he suggests that just as he found both empathy and danger with the seal, the community might seek a way to engage with their issues about the Nigerian women in a less threatened way. He is not comparing seals and women but he perceives collective positions of vulnerability, danger, disorientation and otherness and presents the image of the problem of the seal as a way of broadening the discussion. As with other shamanic

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<sup>115</sup> Coates, M., (2005) No page numbers.

<sup>116</sup> Coates, M., (2006) *Radio Shaman*, Single Channel HD Video, Duration: 09:31 minutes  
 Courtesy of the artist and Workplace Gallery, UK.

<sup>4</sup> Broglio, R., (2011) *Surface encounters: thinking with animals and art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p120

journeys he has taken on behalf of a community, the solution is never clear or literal. Instead, as Ron Broglio writes, the artist perhaps simply or naively indicates 'a pathway of affect that otherwise remained hidden.'<sup>117</sup> In a similar performance ritual for the residents of a soon-to-be demolished tower block in Liverpool, titled *Journey to the Lower World* (2003), the action takes place in the living room of one of the participants. Complete with the deer skin, drumming sounds on a cassette tape and ringing of a bunch of keys instead of bells, Coates' answer to the group's question about what will become of the community when they move to the new estate ("Do we have a protector and what is it?") is perhaps even more obscure than the seal pup and involves a sparrow hawk with an injured wing.<sup>118</sup> But in this case it is the residents themselves that tease out the imagery he presented to them and put together a series of possible derivations that suggested a way of supporting each other as a broken-up entity, and of finding ways of staying together. Again the image of vulnerability is strongest and the notion of an empathic response is what emerges.

Coates' approach to neo-shamanism and his loose and urbane collection of ritual objects that might approximate those of a 'real' or 'serious' shaman has been described by himself and others as accessible, humorous, and loaded with bathos (Coates, 2005; Finlay, 2005; Broglio, 2011; Aloï, 2007, 2011). His whimsical forays into ritual and play mixed with an expertise in ornithology and a developed interest in anthropology has resulted in his work being categorized as superficial and lacking the depth of engagement of an artist like Joseph Beuys whose actions also borrowed

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., Coates (2005).

from shamanic traditions (Walters, 2010). JJ Charlesworth's summarizes these dilemmas when he writes:

This act of appropriation [of shamanism] from its original communal context into our Western secular culture is already a form of mimicry and, of course, in a social context, mimicry can be seen as a form of deceit: What is the boundary between shamanism and charlatanism?...The shaman of *Journey* may be a charlatan, because his act, the act of making things better, seems too implausible – not because he has belief, but because he has not convinced us to believe in him. Yet this derelict form of character is one we are nevertheless happy to maintain in the more contemporary guise of the socially committed artist.<sup>119</sup>

I argue that because Coates exposes his 'charlatanism' first, ahead of his genuine interest in the lives of others of all species, and only then reveals his genuine understanding of what it is like to be other, to become-animal guided by the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, he can remain superficial and lightly accessible as well as having a praxis of genuine depth. At the 2013 Rutland Bird Fair, for example, the largest birding and bird conservation event in Britain, he gave a short talk and performance demonstration of his epic digital project *Dawn Chorus* (2007) which turns human singing into bird song. In a reverse echo of the Italian bird fairs I described in the last chapter, this event attracts over twenty thousand bird enthusiasts and conservationists and an audience which Coates addresses as readily as his peers in an art gallery. Therefore, in answer to Charlesworth's question of boundaries, I am compelled to bring into focus the blurred nature of these boundaries

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<sup>119</sup> JJ Charlesworth, 'Art is good for you. Art is Good for you.' In Coates (2005), *Journey*. No page numbers.

between the philosopher and the bird-watcher, between the professional artist and the amateur shaman, between the bird mimic and the sound artist.

Through the work of Coates, I find pathways in which I will explore these boundaries and probe deeper into the ideas that have emerged out of his shamanic actions, beginning with my proposal that his accumulated work is not a casual, even cynical version of shamanism but in fact a form of *neo*-shamanism and rooted in a deep empathy based on zoomorphological knowledge and radical cultural understanding. As a neo-shaman, Coates appropriates wildly, has no direct social links to the cosmologies and ritual practices of northern circumpolar peoples but freely selects the skills and tools of the traditions that suit his purposes. As an artist, his combination of animal acoustics, play, ritual and performance refers to an evolutionary perspective on what has gone before as well as pointing to pathways of multiple becomings. Recalling Joseph Roach's maxim of placing 'memory and invention' at the crux of performance, I will now analyze the elements that I perceive are driving specific works such as Coates's *Radio Shaman*, beginning with its material properties, its acoustic histories, ritual histories and in due course, its contemporary resonances.

### **First Play, then Empathy.**

In the triad of play, ritual and performance that come together to form the variously established theories of the evolution of performance, play is most closely associated with animals and our evolutionary ties with nonhuman biological continuities. Play in animals has been studied to a much greater extent than exclusive human playing and as a result, according to some scholars our impulse to perform, to create performance

or to observe and identify with the performances of others emerges out of this evolutionary heritage. As Brian Boyd explains: 'Without a biocultural perspective we cannot appreciate how deeply surprising fiction is, and how deeply natural.'<sup>120</sup> Among most mammals, rather than exclusively responding to external stimuli, play is taken up spontaneously or it can be intentional and self-reinforcing. With this in mind it is useful to turn to a study like Boyd's that shows how play, as an evolutionary adaptation, can reveal the advantages of flexibility of action, and how rehearsing flight and fight responses can playfully 'refine skills, extend repertoires and sharpen sensitivities.'<sup>121</sup> Play is compulsive, rewarding and highly social and 'as the foundation of all performance, the activity of play in animals already entails notions of intentionality, enjoyment and event.'<sup>122</sup> In more recent studies of animal play behaviour, one of the most striking cognitive abilities we share with other mammals is empathy. Primatologist Franz de Waal, for example, has very successfully campaigned for the acceptance of the importance of recognizing empathy in chimpanzees and large primates and his work has altered approaches to primate research (de Waal, 2001, 2006). Neuroscientific work on mirror neurons, which we share with many mammal species further validates the place of empathy in behaviour and language learning, (as we saw with the finches in chapter one) but is explicitly demonstrated across performance platforms – in sport, dancing, gambling, celebrating, playing music, singing and especially on the stage. The spectator's mirror neurons also fire in response to every motion of the actor and this is what creates the identification with a character or a situation.

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<sup>120</sup> Boyd, Brian (2009), *On the origins of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press. p3.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., Boyd, p14.

<sup>122</sup> McConachie, B., (2011), 'An Evolutionary Perspective on Play, Performance, and Ritual' in *TDR: The Drama Review*, 55,4. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press

What we share with animals in terms of mirror neurons and our capacity for empathy is basic compared with our conceptual capacity for understanding the intentions, needs and emotions of other humans and our hypersensitivity and ability to detect intention in the minds of others. Mirror neuron networks in the primary emotions we have in common with other mammals are vital, as de Waal has advocated, to our understanding of the minds of animals and therefore affect our responsibility towards them. However it is also our significantly enhanced capacity in other cognitive abilities that demonstrates our difference from other members of the animal kingdom. The most essential of these evolutionary discontinuities are: human capacity for symbolic, expressive language communication and reasoning; making complex tools; altruism, compassion and co-operation with non-relatives; and mental self-projection, creating imaginary, alternative worlds, which is essential to the foundation of all performance. Embodying and performing a subjunctive reality is generally considered to be unique to humans (Rilling, 2008). Bruce McConachie phrases the distinction like this: 'Many animals play, but none except *Homo sapiens* can play games.'<sup>123</sup> Games rely on social knowledge and the ability to be both immersed in a game in order to compete, for example like an athlete, but also to step outside the action to strategize or observe reactions and the play of others. Stepping in and out of roles, separating the self and blending concepts of self with concepts of another is at the centre of both empathy and performance. This 'conceptual blending' is both a conscious and unconscious activity which McConachie considers not just 'an option for theatrical participants; it is a cognitive necessity.'<sup>124</sup> I am tracing this line of

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., McConachie. p41

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p40



mirroring and empathic action through evolutionary human-animal lines to show how mirror neurons and their phenomenal impact on neuroscientific understanding of how we become human has its origins in a shared empathic neurological history with the animal.

The discovery of mirror neurons, which are activated by just observing another's intentional behaviour, has caused a cross-disciplinary rethinking of what we thought we knew about the socio-biological and experiential basics that define human sociality. Instead, as Douglas Hollan explains, 'automatic, biologically based, embodied forms of imitation and attunement, such as the mirror neuron system, emotional contagion, and the recognition of facial expressions, are far more central to human culture and behaviour than we have previously imagined.'<sup>125</sup> While science is still at the beginning stages of understanding the evolutionary, biological, intersubjective and phenomenological constituents of the most basic and general forms of empathy, researchers such as Hollan are already indicating that the complexities of our cultural relations and elaborations can be reflected in a revisiting of conventional Western notions of empathy. Hollan calls for further ethnographic studies of empathy in context in order to move on from arbitrary, generalized and biased (American-European) ideas of empathy, especially in relation to human-animal relationships (Hollan, 76). In response to this call, some anthropologists have begun to look deeper into empathic patterns in populations at the borderline regions of human-animal intra-actions where hunting, mimicry, empathy and performance become blended. In some of the studies of Rane Willerslev (2004, 2007, 2014) and his

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<sup>125</sup> Hollan, D., (2012). Emerging Issues in the Cross-Cultural Study of Empathy. *Emotion Review*, 4(1), pp. 70-78.

colleagues, which I will draw from here, a rich resource has been uncovered which I consider valuable to my analysis of intra-species empathy in the context of performance.

### **Becoming elk.**

When the elders of the Siberian Yukaghir community decided that their guest, a young Danish anthropology student (Willerslev) was ready to go hunting for elk, they did not prepare him for the extraordinary performance he was about to witness deep in the Tundra forest. At the crucial moment of the hunt Willerslev's guide, Old Spiridon, began rocking back and forth, wearing an elk hide coat and protruding headgear complete with large elk ears. His skis of smooth elk skin, 'so as to sound like the animal when moving in the snow, made him an elk: yet the lower part of his face below the hat, with its human eyes, nose and mouth, along with the loaded rifle in his hands, made him a man.'<sup>126</sup> For the first time Willerslev witnesses the complications of his research into both the concepts and practicalities of hunting, animism, and personhood among the Yukaghir and other indigenous populations of Siberia and their understandings from Western assumptions about what is animal and what is human.

As he continued his transformation, Old Spiridon began to take on a 'liminal' quality where 'he was not an elk, and yet he was not *not* elk.' Soon a female elk and calf emerged into the clearing where the hunter performed his movements and sounds:

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<sup>126</sup> Rane Willerslev (2007) *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism and personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs*, Berkeley: University of California Press p1.

At first the animals stood still, the mother lifting and lowering her huge head in bewilderment, unable to solve the puzzle in front of her. But as Spiridon moved closer she was captured by his mimetic performance, suspended in her disbelief and started walking straight towards him with the calf trotting behind her. At that point he lifted his gun and shot them both dead.<sup>127</sup>

When Willerslev discussed the event with Old Spiridon later on back at the camp he learned that the elk was not alone in her visionary enchantment. As the elk approached him Spiridon saw instead a beautiful woman and a child singing to him to come home with her. At that moment he knew he had to kill her because, he said, 'Had I gone with her, I myself would have died. She would have killed me.' For the Yukaghir, the capacity to firstly see and then take on the appearance and 'spirit' of another being is central to their idea of what it is to be a person. Equally animals and other non-human entities are capable of temporarily moving in and out of each other's bodies, changing their perspective and becoming something other than their own selves. Recognizing the empathic nature within these relationships, the hunter becomes 'a hyper-reflexive pretender, who by withholding his own identity as predator maximizes the seductive force of his deceptive enactment of the animal and its associated spiritual being.'<sup>128</sup> All this empathy has now become tactical.

For the huntsmen returning to camp it is very important to talk about the hunt and their experience in detail over a long period amongst each other. In a series of transformations that define the Yukaghir hunt, perhaps this action of talking and

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p1.

<sup>128</sup> Bubant, N, and R. Willerslev, (2015). The Dark Side of Empathy: Mimesis, Deception, and the Magic of Alterity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57(1), p20.

recounting is the most important as it reinstates the hunter back into his human social self and all traces of the animal he became are slowly dissolved in the process of becoming human. Willerslev says 'the hunting process as a whole is, in effect, an act of temporary transformations – not only the transformation from "me" to "*not* not me," but also back to me again.'<sup>129</sup> Human speech and smell are the means to re-humanize oneself among the hunters in their encampment and remain 'the tools for purging otherness from the self and reconstructing one's human identity.'<sup>130</sup> However the recounting of the events of the hunt is not in itself a performative story-telling. The narrator speaking in either Yukaghir, Sakha or Russian is only partially comprehensible and is not talking to any particular audience but instead reintroducing their own consciousness to the human life from which it had withdrawn, reminding themselves that their personhood is now human and not elk.

Human language is the security against total dissolution of the self or a complete or even partial metamorphosis into some mute other. For the Yukaghir, worse than death is to become a *syugusuy suroma* or 'wild one' – creatures that are human in appearance but covered in fur, living solitary lives in the forest at a distance from both animals and people. The *syugusuy suroma* are hunters who failed to find their way back to camp and had no-one to talk with about their experience and so they occupy this liminal state between both animal and human societies. While the hunters see both animals and spirits as 'cultural' beings, the *syugusuy suroma* are 'wild' because they are in-between creatures who have lost their language. Isolation from communication with one's own kind is the great fear of the Yukaghair hunter. In

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., Willerslev (2007) *Soul Hunters*, P 172

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

the reflexive action of storytelling, the men are reconstructing their identities as human persons with the trace of elk-becomings now part of that narrative.

In Yukaghir and many other traditional cultures that involve animism, personhood is not entirely the preserve of the human. But in Willerslev's study the idea of personification of animals for the hunter has some delicate and crucial aspects that pronounce the more performative qualities of the hunter's actions. When facing the elk, Spiridon recognizes the shared psychological space he has entered into with the elk mother and calf and is forced to see and hear the person of the elk speaking and communicating with him, or rather with his elk-hood. Equally he sees how the elk is beginning to mimic his dancing actions and hears her inviting him closer into her world. This 'situation of mutual mimicry' where the elk starts to imitate him imitating an animal results in a version of personhood for the elk, not just a 'downright metaphorical projection of human consciousness onto nonhuman entities.'<sup>131</sup> Rather in this highly sensitive and ambiguous, even dangerous context personhoods are gained and lost, ebbing and flowing in and out of each other's awareness, as both prey animals and killers.

It is this momentary *sharing* of personhood that defines the actions of the Yukaghir in particular, where necessity, skill and tradition are coming together in order to produce another sharing – of meat, fur and communal living. For the hunter, this tactical empathy is not just a matter of acquiring meat to survive but is crucially 'a hazardous struggle to secure boundaries and to preserve his self-identity' as both a

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Bubant and Willerslev, p18

hunter *and* a human.<sup>132</sup> It is in the precise act of empathically mimicking the other 'that that other is constructed as "other"' and where 'the alterity of the other is not minimized, but rather sometimes radicalized through empathy.'<sup>133</sup> In the example of the Yukaghir hunter, the concept of tactical empathy where violence and vicariousness are faculties of survival and ambition, there is a deepening and enhancing of previous Western notions of virtuous, mutual understanding, compassion and social cohesion brought about with this ethnographic perspective. Instead of falling back on conventional ways of seeing empathy and violence as always anathema to each other, the ethnographers who investigate instances where deception, sociality, violence and empathy are not opposed but linked together provide a new platform from which to view human life (Hollan and Throop, 2008; Hollan, 2008; Viveiros de Castro, 1998; Bubant and Willerslev, 2015).

Siberian hunters conceive of an animist ontology and universe inside which they must 'steer a difficult course between transcending difference and maintaining identity through mimetic empathy.'<sup>134</sup> Even more fragile than the tactical empathy at work here, which strives towards identification, is the question of perspectivism and the ability to step in and out of the subjective perspective of the other. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro calls this faculty a process of 'perspectival multinaturalism.'<sup>135</sup> In the Amerindian societies that he has extensively examined he identifies two modes of being and of seeing the world. Perspectivism describes a world view that is defined by relative stance – cultivated plants are seen as blood relatives by those who grow

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., Bubant and Willerslev p7

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p29

<sup>135</sup> Viveiros de Castro, E., (2004). Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies. *Common Knowledge*, **10**(3), p466.

them, a prey animal can approach a hunter as an equal, a shaman relates to tree spirit as an associate. Multinaturalism is Viveiros de Castro's counter to universalizing Western ideologies of what is multi-culturally experienced and exclusively human. In multinaturalism, 'whatever possesses a soul is capable of having a point of view' – which is not the same as an opinion (multiculturalism), but more that the perspective of, say, the leaf-cutter ant and its concerns may have to be taken into account, when searching for the solution to a human problem that might cross the path of the ant. The ant's perspective, like the human's is multinatural because it is 'guaranteed by the objective universality of body and substance.'<sup>136</sup> In this indigenous theory, culture is universal, but nature is particular.

At the centre of this Amerindian perspectival multinaturalism, where prey and predator and tribal warfare determine the lifeworlds of its populations of all species, Viveiros de Castro identifies shamanism as the major context in which "self" and "other" develop culturally complex relations. Just as 'in warfare, a human other, an "enemy" is used to bring the "self" into existence', shamanism begins by negotiating the relationships of human and nonhuman entities, accepting their perspectives even if they are distorted and distinguishing what is cultural from what is natural.<sup>137</sup> There are hemispherical differences in the ethnographic studies I am gathering together here. In Amazonian animism, all entities are subjectively 'human' first and have souls and therefore be can said to have an anthropocentric worldview. Perspectivism implies that as predation is the universalizing fact of life, all beings are looking at their world and each other in, formally, the same way. In the Northern circumpolar

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid Viveiros de Castro, p466.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid Viveiros de Castro, p464

traditions that the Yukaghir practice and where the kind of shamanism that is practiced has influenced the artists in my study, 'who you are and whom you perceive as prey and predator depends on the kind of body you have.'<sup>138</sup> Personification and personhood are gained via the body and its visual and acoustic dimensions. The person that you think you are and the person you say that you are, be it elk, rat, leaf-cutter ant or human, is not assumed or automatically understood until it is performed as a means of attraction, seduction, imitation and perhaps imagination. Just as the hunter thinks he can seduce the animal into believing he is something else, so the animal can distract its human predator with an impression of something the hunter desires. These conceptualizations of how hunting performs positive, non-coercive acts of seduction where animals *offer* themselves as part of a survival drama functions as a screen and blurs the reality of being a human predator (Willerslev, 2015). Old Spiridon and his fellow Yukaghir rely on the idea of play and playfulness in their hunt practices in the knowledge that this tactical empathy will draw the animal in to a close, slippery proximity of trust and understanding but not too close to overwhelm the hunter's consciousness and where the end of the play is death.

Animals are always interested in deception. They practice camouflage and they get what they want by being playfully, tactically, even empathically mimetic. According to Roger Caillois, it is general to find 'many remains of mimetic insects in the stomachs of predators' including insects that are inedible but also mimetic.<sup>139</sup> In Caillois' specialized study he undoes generalized notions of the function of mimicry as solely to protect oneself or trick others but introduces new categories of biomorphology

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid Bubandt and Willerslev (2015), p14

<sup>139</sup> Caillois, R. and Shepley, J., (1984). Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia. *October*, 31, p25.



such as defensive, offensive, direct and indirect mimicry and the crossover of these disguises into multinatural positions of adaptation and resemblance. Playing with identity is a risky, morphological game that persists in defying the order that we crave from species when studying the natural world. Caillois draws intriguing lines between praying mantis, fruit flies, Gustave Flaubert and Salvador Dali's paintings in which 'whatever the artist may say, these invisible men, sleeping women, horses and lions are less the expression of ambiguities or of paranoiac "plurivocities" than of *mimetic assimilations of the animate to the inanimate*.'<sup>140</sup> In the final spectacle of Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*, the mystic visionary succumbs to a phenomenological experience of mimicry where 'plants are now no longer distinguished from animals...Insects identical with rose petals, plants are confused with stones. Rocks looks like brains, stalactites like breasts, veins of iron like tapestries adorned with figures' and so on until the saint wants to split himself in pieces, to be part of everything, 'to penetrate each atom, to descend to the bottom of matter, to *be* matter.'<sup>141</sup> What Caillois draws attention to in this passage from Flaubert is the beginnings of the breakdown of the perceived strengths of the rational mind. Instead of being held together by conventional categories of reality, it opens to the wonders of 'weakness' in a psychasthenic state of loosening logical control, of irresistible compulsions, painful sensibilities and abnormally strong identification with the perspectives and emotions of others to the extent of irretrievable disturbance of the self. The condition is now more commonly called schizophrenia and in the section that follows I will thread these concepts of play, empathy, shamanism and schizophrenia together more cogently. I conclude this first analysis of

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., Caillois, p31. Emphasis added.

<sup>141</sup> Flaubert quoted in Caillois (1984) p31. Emphasis in original.

ritual, play and the complexities of performing empathy with this point: an empathic understanding of animal perspectives that has emerged out of hunting traditions and the performances that extend from the ritualization of human-animal entanglements in hunting come together in the key figure of the enduring and problematic practitioner of shamanism.

### **Performing empathy: shamanism in praxis.**

When Coates wears the taxidermied skin, head and hooves of a deer in his performances he is connecting with shamanic traditions that have evolved within hunting communities where animal skins and heads are not worn as “masks” to change appearance or hide the human underneath an outer layer of animal. Instead it is a method of metaphysically transforming the identity of the wearer, where the body-costume itself is a tool or apparatus akin to a diving suit or a space suit. Wearing the skin activates the power of the deer body. While hunting apparel is used to camouflage, ritual clothing is used not to deceive but to ‘do’ something, to travel and in fact transcend appearances all together (Viverios de Castro, 1998).

The dramatic appearance of Coates in the deer skin in a small apartment in Liverpool or on the streets of Stavanger is a primary surrealist jolt on the way to a deeper engagement with the questions that arise in this body of work. The first question that strikes me is how did he acquire the skin and what had to happen in order for this surreal image to be created? Coates began searching for a deer skin as it was the animal he first met on all of his early training journeys in practicing neo-shamanism. In later works he often uses only the head of an animal such as a badger and even a horse, but for these first community projects he felt he needed more help. With the

full deer skin he says: 'The skin would cover me, matching me physically – I couldn't imagine losing myself with a rabbit or a squirrel.'<sup>142</sup> The two year-old buck skin came from an annual deer cull in Cumbria. The antlers came from an older male deer and Coates requested the taxidermist to leave the hooves on. The process of creating this costume, which usurps traditional skills such as hunting and rendering animal bodies for food and clothing, straddles two not-dissociated ideas; Viveiros de Castro's notion that it is the shaman in deer's clothing who has the unique ability to become a 'trans-specific' being, visualizing the human spirit inside every animal and living thing and where the discardable and exchangeable animal skin and body is endowed with specific affects and capacities; and secondly, Steve Baker's term 'botched taxidermy' conceptualizes a 'loose but convenient link between botchery and butchery' in his examination of contemporary art's renditions of 'the postmodern animal.'<sup>143</sup> Baker borrows the term botching (*rater*) from Deleuze and Guattari where they claim that insufficiently imaginative (specifically Freudian) psychoanalysis can 'go wrong, backfire, mess up, spoil, botch or bungle' the body, but also, Baker interprets that, 'it can mean sticking or cobbling something together in a makeshift way', an assemblage that 'holds together.' Crucially in Baker's hands, botching is creative 'precisely because of its provisional, playful, loosely experimental operation.'<sup>144</sup> In reflecting on what he perceives as the abrasive visibility of late twentieth century artworks that use taxidermied animal bodies Baker writes:

It was their wrongness that gave them their edge. In botching the body, in calling into question the categories and the boundaries of the human and the nonhuman, the pure, the perfect, the whole, the beautiful and the proper, they

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., Coates, (2005), *Journey*, 'The Deer Skin'. No page numbers.

<sup>143</sup> Baker, Steve (2000) *The postmodern animal*. Reaktion:London. P64

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., Baker (2000) p64

held out the promise of an art, to borrow Adam Phillips's tantalizing words, in which 'the idea of human completeness disappears', and whose difficult effect might also offer what calls good ways of bearing our incompleteness. Botching is a creative procedure precisely because of its openness to getting things wrong.<sup>145</sup>

In the performances of Coates that I am unpacking here I suggest there is a purposeful botching at work. In neo-shamanism, albeit a botched version, Coates finds 'good ways of bearing our incompleteness' somewhere between tragedy and comedy. As Adam Phillips continues, 'tragedy is when we are ruined by our insufficiency, comedy is when we can relish it.'<sup>146</sup> I will return to these botched becomings further on in this chapter but I want to momentarily open out some of the key elements of historical shamanic praxis which I believe support the strong connections that link empathy, play, ritual and performance in the contemporary figure of the artist/actor/shaman.

For Jean-Marie Pradier, 'the highly organized performative behavior of a shaman – despite his sometimes incoherent appearance in secular eyes – is a prelude to the activity of that other intermediary between imaginary worlds and the 'real' world: the actor' where their action can 'bring into contact what is archaic in us and what is elaborated symbolically, what is animal and what is human.'<sup>147</sup> This theory of archaic threads of connection with ancestral (and animal) points of origin also feeds theories of performance where many practitioners turn and return to find practical methods

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<sup>145</sup> Baker, S (2008) 'Something's gone wrong again' in *Antennae: The journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, ed. Aloï, G. Issue 7, p4

<sup>146</sup> Phillips, Adam, (1996) *Terrors and Experts*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA. p7

<sup>147</sup> Pradier, J (2000) 'Animals, Angel and Performance' in ed. Alan Read, *Performance Research*, 5, 2, 11 p12-13

of bridging performer/spectator relations , as Pradier suggests, 'by bringing into perception our bios, the vital flux that connects us to other species and to the cosmos.'<sup>148</sup> Inside any sensate relationship an active empathy is at work, creating a mirror that is as rational as it is emotional, as well as being playful and tactical. As we have seen it is also profoundly perspectival where, according to Viveiros de Castro's Amerindian studies, depending on one's position inside what ever type of body you occupy, you are in a state of being 'where self and others interpenetrate, submerged in the same immanent, presubjective and preobjective milieu', the result of which is played out in mythologizing contexts of art, ritual and religion.<sup>149</sup>

In these counter-western examples where spiritual universality and corporeal diversity (as opposed to human spiritual uniqueness and mere biological connection to animality) define human-animal relations in the Amazon, there are interesting inverted parallels here with how Western artists have usurped and 'botched' these conventional dualisms of nature and culture. As Viveiros de Castro summarizes: 'If Western multiculturalism is relativism as public policy, then Amerindian perspectivist shamanism is multinaturalism as cosmic politics.'<sup>150</sup> Inside and in-between these layers of public and cosmic politics, the figure of the shaman has remained a valuable, marginal significance and has influenced artists like Joseph Beuys. Beuys' own writings and thoughts on shamanism, animal power and social crises are well documented and in many ways anticipate the ritualistic work of contemporary artists such as Coates, Alastair MacLennan (b.1943), and Marina

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., Pradier, p21

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., Viveiros de Castro (2004), p464

<sup>150</sup> Viveiros de Castro, E., (1998) 'Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism' in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol 4, No.3, p472

Abramović (b.1946). Equally his quasi-messianic healer stance and self-conferring of mandates to express the needs of the collective have been critiqued as unresolved and even resistant to conclusive interpretation (Verwoert, 2008). When Beuys turned to the animal it was, for him, a source of prelinguistic force, of natural ecologies unaffected by civilizations and a means of access to lost energies needed to repair the damage human society was doing to itself. It is his engagement with the idea of multispecies intercommunicability that I believe embody the many concepts I am drawing together here.

Beuys's bestiary is an impressive collection of appearances in performance, drawing and sculpture by moose, hares, bees, goats, swans, foxes, coyotes, elk, horses and stags. In well-known works such as *How to explain pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965) and *Coyote: I like America and America likes me* (1974) Beuys presents striking images of interaction with dead and living animals that themselves are always already symbolic of otherness. By enveloping archaic material into his actions, such as covering his head and body in honey, gold and felt Beuys stood apart from his contemporaries (for example, Warhol) in his deep and tactical empathy with animal experience and revealed his allegiance to nonhuman perspectives of the world. In the filmed fragments that exist of both *Dead Hare* and *Coyote*, what is striking is the manner in which Beuys communicates with the animals. His gold and honey mask limits any expressive explanations of pictures to the dead hare, but it is just possible to make out his muttering to the animal he re-animates in front of the gallery paintings. In *Coyote*, quietly spoken moments are shared with the canine when they take a break from their daily rituals of felt wrapping, paper shredding and bell ringing in the now iconic performance at René Block Gallery in New York. These acoustic elements in

Beuys's work have rarely been commented on largely because of the fact that the only access to these pieces has been through still photographs, in which the coyote looks fierce (when it was in fact a semi-tame ranch animal, with the name Little John, from New Jersey and a willing, communicative participant) and the hare always appears stiffly dead, (while the newly available film fragments online reveal a flopping soft creature, revived by Beuys's tender actions animating its ears, paws and head). However it is in *Der Chef* (1964) that I find the most compelling and enduring assemblage of shamanic legacies, animal voices and artist's body and an inscrutability which sustains both the power of the piece and the critical frustrations it has generated (Adams, 1992: Verwoert, 2008).

Lying on the concrete floor of the René Block gallery in Berlin for *Der Chef*, Beuys envelops his body in a felt wrap made from Hare fur. At either end of his wrapped body lie two dead hares and this assemblage forms the central axis of Beuys's performance installation that permits viewing but resists casual involvement. Beuys stages the piece in the context with his own biographical experience of a wartime scenario where his WWII plane crashed in Tartar territory and the local tribal response was to wrap the body of the fallen one in animal fat and felt. Beuys's survival via these materials determined his approach to what art can do when it is informed by what a people's physical and material knowledge can achieve. For Beuys, the stag's branching antlers symbolized 'a head enlivened with spiritual insight and intuition through the vitality of the blood circulating from the heart through the head and even outside the head.'<sup>151</sup> In *Der Chef*, he invokes another dimension of animal

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<sup>151</sup> Adams, D (1992) Joseph Beuys: Pioneer of a Radical Ecology, 1992, 51, 2, *Art and Ecology*, 26-34, College Art Association. p30

power, the guttural voice of the deer stag. From inside the roll of felt, via a microphone and a set of amplifiers in the adjoining public space, Beuys vocalized the bawl of the stag and inarticulate noises inaudible without the sound system. The acousmatics of the piece are layered between the unseen cry of the mysterious and powerful animal and the public address system of the chief or boss or leader of the title where Beuys is blending these acoustic events in pursuit of authority and authenticity.

Remaining unseen for the eight-hour performance, mirroring the working day of the everyday person, he also becomes that person's boss, delivering orders through the PA system of the workplace, but with the voice of an animal. He explains:

The sounds I make are taken consciously from animals...I see it as a way of coming in contact with other forms of existence, beyond the human one. It's going way beyond our restricted understanding to expand the scale of producers of energy among co-operators (such as nonhuman actors) in other spaces, all of whom have different abilities.<sup>152</sup>

Even the dead hares have more preserved potential, as Beuys has provocatively stated, than most stubbornly rational people. It is easier to talk with them about creativity and ecology than it is with humans as hares both symbolize and understand the essentials of life. Beuys needs 'nature and also all the animals just like he needs his heart, his liver and his lungs, so therefore one can see the hare as an external organ of the human being' and so a dialogue with the animal is a dialogue with the self.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Adams, *ibid* p30

<sup>153</sup> Television interview with Joseph Beuys from 1983.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk\\_QH0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk_QH0). Accessed 10 March 2015.



The idea of extending of the body, via the animal voice, into an experience of communication with the land, oxygen, rivers, forests and burrows with the language of neo-shamanism and New Age practices that are as familiar as they are easily dismissed as naïve or deluded, was a very radical notion in the nineteen sixties. If Beuys is to be critiqued for taking a healer-messiah or leader-boss position in works like *Der Chef*, he must also be acknowledged for bringing the figure of the shaman back into the light in a time of materialist expansion when it could not have been more incongruous. By unsettling the status quo and frustrating expectations of what an artist and a performance should be, Beuys' ambition was to change how we look at art and how art could perform. What he does not do, unlike Coates, is botch his sources and methods in order to pull these terms apart and explore their meaning.

In the figure of the shaman and the animal coming together to broaden awareness, heal trauma and generate social reform, Beuys adopts the position, conceptually, 'not to return to the past, into a time when the shaman's existence was justified' but instead to use 'this old figure to express something about the future by saying that the shaman stood for something that was capable of uniting material as well as spiritual contexts into one single entity.'<sup>154</sup> For Erika Fischer-Lichte, the animal body in Beuys' actions 'emerged as an energetic, living organism – a body-in-becoming. There was no difference between the materiality of the human body and that of the animal' which became material 'only in its mortification.'<sup>155</sup> In this way Beuys anticipates the surge in the appearance of the animal in the late twentieth century in arts and performance

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<sup>154</sup> Beuys quoted in Erika Fischer-Lichte, (2008) *The transformative power of power of performance*. Routledge; Abingdon, p104

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., Fischer-Lichte, p105

practices where the animal body becomes a heavily anthropomorphized image of alienation, sentiment, mourning, the uncanny, the ironic, the parodic and the melancholic plight of the postmodern human. However the distance between Beuys and early twenty-first century art with animals expands and separates from these anthropomorphizations, as Baker has argued, with 'one characteristic of much postmodern animal art in its *refusal* of symbolism, its insistence on carving out a space in which the physical body of the animal – living or dead – can be present as itself.'<sup>156</sup> In the context of Deleuze and Guattari's statement that 'when the artist becomes the animal the animal becomes something else', it only becomes something thing else for the human theorist. The animal in question remains the same. No-one wants to fully become-animal, otherwise nothing would be written or performed as an animal becoming. As in hunting becomings, in order to become-animal one must always retain human consciousness and inhabit the differences.

In another comparative analysis of Beuys and Coates and their engagement with shamanism, Victoria Walters concludes that Beuys' anthropological approach to the dilemmas in art is one of 'substance' while Coates's pathetic and bathetic methods are less serious. Beuys becomes a 'vibrant beacon' while Coates founders between bathos and pathos and this 'double aspect of Coates' work appears not only as the cathartic position of the trickster, but as a reflection of the schizophrenia of his artistic predicament.'<sup>157</sup> I argue that this is precisely what makes Coates so relevant not only to contemporary debate about animals and performance but to the current ecological and spiritual status of human-animal social life that Beuys had dreamed and

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<sup>156</sup> Baker, Steve (2013) *Artist/Animal*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p7. Emphasis added.

<sup>157</sup> Walters, V (2010) 'The Artist as Shaman: The work of Joseph Beuys and Marcus Coates' in eds Schneider, A and Wright, C., *Between art and anthropology: contemporary ethnographic practice*. Berg: Oxford. p47

proselytized about perfecting through art. The schizophrenic predicament at the core of Coates' ethos is one of deep empathic responsibility and dangerous anarchic possibility where the shaman artist, as a foil of social disfunctionality is on the point of breakdown. For Beuys, art was to be the saviour of social decline but for Coates social empathy and its ritual histories might just be able to save art from its own collapse in a time of neoliberal hyper-individualism brought about by deep capitalism. In an early work titled *Finfolk* (2003) Coates brings his understanding of animality, myth and current crises to a destabilizing edge in performance which I will analyze momentarily. But before doing so I wish to briefly revise and combine the main terms that have emerged in this chapter, namely the connections I have made between performance, hunting, shamanism and now schizophrenia.

### **Shamanism, schizophrenia and becoming.**

When Willerslev says 'the hunting process as a whole is, in effect, an act of temporary transformations – not only the transformation from "me" to "*not* not me," but also back to me again,' his question of identity and transformation is applicable to how Deleuze and Guattari understand schizophrenia and in a further folding over, how shamanism and schizophrenia became attached to each other in Deleuze's concept of Becoming, which I believe draws these fields together in fascinating ways.<sup>158</sup> In what follows I will briefly discuss the strange phenomenon of the shamanic 'turn' in late twentieth century definitions of schizophrenia and then move to show how these ideas echo down through Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophies and into contemporary performance practices.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., Willerslev (2007) p172

In the complex contemporary terrain of creatural acoustics in performance, I have traced pathways of empathy that are tactical in hunting, aspirational in shamanism and I would say, essential in performance. To return briefly to the Siberian Yukaghir, it is important to point out that the practices of hunting, animism, perspectivism and shamanism that Viveiros de Castro and Willerslev's valuable and rigorous fieldwork brings to our attention are contemporary living cultures of unbroken tradition that are practiced everyday in both hemispheres. This contrasts with some artists' perception of tribal cultural ritual and imagery as ancient and lost, and who are motivated by a nostalgic desire to resurrect the archaic in their work. Where living indigenous cultures and western interests in the archaic converge is in ethnotourism and organized shaman experiences for western tourists in the Americas. The resulting newly-commodified forms of practice cater to tourists' fantasies of cultural alterity, where the performative event is privileged over traditional training as healer within indigenous communities. In Native American communities, neo-shamanism is regarded with horror. Adopting the role of a 'shamanic clown' by 'wannabe indians' outside indigenous ritual practices and communities, is regarded as 'spiritual suicide' as well as a further form of imperial and colonial dilution of their culture.<sup>159</sup> The discursive complexities that are rampant in the shifting shamanic identities being created as commodities (and often by the shamans themselves) in these cross-cultural encounters is a study in itself and outside the scope of my focus. But I acknowledge these issues here as a reminder of the continually changing presence, meaning and problematics of legitimacy of the shaman in every era up to and including the present (Davidov, V.M., 2010).

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<sup>159</sup> Wallis, Robert J., (2003) *Shamans/neo-Shamans: ecstasy, alternative archaeologies, and contemporary pagans*. London ; New York: Routledge. pp195 - 201

As the figure and function of the shaman has been in discussion for several centuries of western thought and study I do not wish to add to any generalizations of such a complex phenomenon. Instead I follow Stanley Krippner's advice to pay attention to the perspective where 'Western interpretations of shamanism often reveal more about the observer than they do about the observed.'<sup>160</sup> I will focus for a moment on one short period in the 1960s which I believe describes something of the elusiveness of understanding what shamanism can be and its influence on artists and writers of that time and in turn on contemporary legacies that begin in this seminal period.

In the mid-1960s when Beuys was devising and performing his live art rituals involving dead hares, felt wraps, honey and gold head masks, and declaring himself a shaman and a healer, the concept of this figure across scholarship ranged from trickster, magician, witch-doctor, priest and entertainer (Flaherty 1988). In 1963 Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote:

The modern version of shamanistic technique called psychoanalysis thus derives its specific characteristics from the fact that in industrial civilization there is no longer any room for mythical time, except within man himself. From this observation, psychoanalysis can draw confirmation of its validity, as well as hope of strengthening its theoretical foundations and understanding better the reasons for its effectiveness, by comparing its methods and goals with those of its precursors, the shamans and sorcerers.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Krippner, Stanley C., (2002) 'Conflicting perspectives in Shamans and Shamanism; Points and Counterpoints.' In *American Psychologist*, November edition, p963

<sup>161</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963) *Structural Anthropology*, tr. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, Vol 1. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books. p204

The mental health professionals that Lévi-Strauss wishes to enfold into shamanic history were in turn pushing shamanism out to the fringes of neurosis, postulating that shamanism was in fact a type of acute schizophrenia where both states share 'grossly non-reality oriented ideation, abnormal perceptual experiences, profound emotional upheavals and bizarre mannerisms.'<sup>162</sup> In psychologist Julian Silverman's landmark study he estimated that the only difference between contemporary understanding of schizophrenia and what is known of shamanic states, in a modern Western context is 'the degree of cultural acceptance of the individual's psychological resolution of a life crisis.'<sup>163</sup> It must also be acknowledged that these links were made following the publication of Micea Eliade's epic and influential study, *Shamanism: archaic techniques of ecstasy* (1964), which remains a key reference. Eliade's definition of what a shaman can be runs the gamut of liminal practices from the trickster-magician and hoaxter to cultural hero and reconciler of opposites, often displaying a kind of tactical empathy for the communal well-being of a people through the use of legerdemain, deception and magic. But it is the deranged and fragmented healer-hoaxter that featured predominately in the early years of refining the diagnosis of schizophrenia. In time psychiatrists would counter the theories of Silverman as both shamanism and schizophrenia became more deeply understood, and the connections at least in psychopathology became untenable. Shamans emerged as the members of their community with the most knowledge, the healthiest constitutions and the keepers of order within vulnerable societies. It is along these lines that in the 1980s and 1990s the origins of psychotherapy were traced back to shamanism (Krippner, 2002). However once the connection had been made,

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<sup>162</sup> Silverman, J (1967)'Shamanism and Acute Schizophrenia', *American Anthropologist*, Vol 69, Issue 1, p22

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., Silverman, p23.

shamanism and schizophrenia have been entangled in each other in ways that ensure their influence leaks into other disciplines, namely art, performance and philosophy.

At Félix Guattari's experimental psychiatric clinic, La Borde, which opened in 1953, he proposed that schizophrenic psychosis was fundamentally a different way of facing the world and a kind of breakthrough rather than a breakdown (Cull, 2012, 10). Guattari's system of organization at La Borde directed that patients and staff shared all duties and swapped positions at regular intervals. Into this environment he regularly brought artists to make a residency and produce work with the patients and staff. Performance proved an enduring method of including people of every position and Guattari encouraged regular performances of devised dramas and vignettes with writers and other visiting artists. He pushed the boundaries of art, empathy and psychosis even further by inviting Japanese 'Butoh' dance artists to work at the clinic, a relatively new form of dance performance in the 1980s, most notably Tanaka Min (b.1946) who performed there in 1986.<sup>164</sup> For Butoh specialist Sondra Fraleigh, the shamanic aspects of the dance form are seldom discussed even though for both Butoh dancers and for shamans everything is alive and everything is changing. She writes, 'Metamorphosis is the metaphysical method of Butoh, its alchemical aspect, and its shamanist basis.'<sup>165</sup> This series of close connections between Guattari, La Borde, butoh, schizophrenia, Deleuze and becoming-animal, I suggest, makes tangible the context in which Deleuze and Guattari developed their philosophy of 'schizoanalysis' in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983) and 'becoming-intense, becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible' in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

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<sup>164</sup> See the filmed document of Tanaka Min and La Borde here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgErye7jXbl>. Accessed 11 March 2015.

<sup>165</sup> Fraleigh, S., (2010) *Butoh: Metaphoric Dance and Global Alchemy*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, p13.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia is a misreading of 'the pure, lived experience' of schizophrenics whose actions and ideas are always interpreted as representational, as opposed to real. Instead they argue that schizophrenic experience produces experiences of 'intense quantities in their pure state, to the point that is almost unbearable...like a cry suspended between life and death, an intense feeling of transition, states of pure naked intensity, stripped of all shape and form.<sup>166</sup> Deleuze and Guattari view the experience as a profoundly empathic encounter, a becoming, an intense, nervous, even frightening event and most importantly, Laura Cull suggests, something 'through which the subject passes, but which cannot be said to belong to that subject.'<sup>167</sup> Deleuze and Guattari blur the distinctions of the clinical and philosophical use of the term as they explain in *What is Philosophy?*(1991) in this direct way:

Philosophy and schizophrenia have often been associated with each other. But in one case the schizophrenic is a conceptual persona who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think, whereas in the other the schizophrenic is a psychosocial type who represses the living being and robs him of his thought.

Sometimes the two are combined, clasped together as if an event that is too intense corresponds to a lived condition that is too hard to bear.<sup>168</sup>

As philosophers and clinicians themselves, Deleuze and Guattari worked together to produce new assemblages of thought where they saw no difficulty in finding ways and means for 'conceptual personae and psychosocial types (to) refer to each other

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<sup>166</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*, Minnesota; University of Minnesota Press. p18

<sup>167</sup> Cull, L. (2012) Schizo-theatre: Guattari, Deleuze, performance and "madness", unpublished conference paper, presented at *Situating and Interpreting States of Mind*, Northumbria University, June 2012. p 5

<sup>168</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., (1994) *What is philosophy?* London: Verso. p70



and combine without ever merging.’<sup>169</sup> Combining without merging is a key aspect of becoming where the emphasis presses for a coexistence of planes of thought and experience, not a top-down or hierarchical succession of systems. Becoming is an infinity of possible mergings, combinations and transferences where for Deleuze and Guattari, their understanding of schizophrenia has a role to play. Putting all conventional diagnoses, labels, and categories of this most contested and distressing condition aside, Deleuze and Guattari espouse a radical recontextualizing of the disturbance of perception at work in the *concept* of schizophrenia, which brings us into a becoming where ‘nothing is representative; rather it is all life and lived experience,...nothing but bands of intensity, potentials, thresholds and gradients’ bringing us ‘as close as possible to the matter, to a burning, living centre of matter’ where we can reach ‘that unbearable point where the mind touches matter and lives its very intensity.’<sup>170</sup> While Deleuze and Guattari have been criticized for having produced a naïve or idealized version of this highly complex condition, as Cull explains, by ‘elevating the figure of their “schizo” to that of a metaphysically privileged visionary,’<sup>171</sup> they are equally scathing of the practice of psychoanalysis that reduces a person to an ‘autistic rag – separated from the real and cut off from life’ with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, which they distinguish from neurosis.<sup>172</sup> Instead they are drawn to the extra-to-the-human faculties of the unfixed or emancipated mind as they perceive it to be. Central to the theory of becoming-animal and becoming-imperceptible is the notion of escape, of ‘lines of flight’ where I find echoes of both shamanic transcendence and schizophrenic terror. In the ethnographic studies of play, performance, and *then* ritual and religion that I have been detailing,

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., (1994), p70

<sup>170</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., (1983) *Anti-Oedipus*:p18

<sup>171</sup> Ibid Cull (2012b) p6

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. p20

the deeper root of this laterally expanding, cross-disciplinary rhizome that Deleuze and Guattari planted and fostered is difficult to locate. In my effort to extract something of this root, I am proposing here that the performance practices with animal sounds of Coates and his peers can create moments of egress out of the strictures of definition and categorization, and instead they can push thinking through performance into a novel arena of play, deep empathy, hypersensitivity and provocative renegotiations of interspecificity. How is this achieved? One approach, I suggest is firstly by becoming-animal and then by botching it.

### **Becoming seal.**

Becoming-animal is a gauntlet flung down before concepts of human identity that privileges human subjectivity and binds it to power systems and processes of exclusionism, exceptionalism, alienation and alterity. Giovanni Aloï even suggests that becoming-animal could go as far as 'to replace human identity with an interspecific performativity (which) is to go some way towards destabilizing the autonomous Cartesian subject and mobilizing an ex-centric subject always in process.'<sup>173</sup> The concept of becoming-animal can be difficult to grasp because there is very little to gauge or measure whether a becoming is taking place or not. Neither can it be directly identified as a resemblance or an analogy, nor is it an experience of recognition. Deleuze and Guattari use these terms in a literal sense in order to force the idea of becoming as a total rejection of all previous references to animality in psychoanalysis. Becoming is defined more than anything by what it is *not*. In this

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<sup>173</sup> Giovanni Aloï (2007), 'Editorial' in Aloï, G (ed) *Antennae: Journal of Nature in Visual Culture*, Issue 4, Winter.p2

complex passage they insist that becomings-animal have nothing to do with imitation, resemblances, metaphors, analogies or personifications:

Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something: neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, establishing corresponding relations; neither is it producing, producing a filiation or producing through filiation. Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling,' or 'producing.'<sup>174</sup>

In becoming, therefore, I do not become a representation of what I am becoming, or a manifestation of this relationship. For Leonard Lawlor, there is no distance of difference between entities as 'it is *not* a relation in which the subject and the object remain outside of one another...and it is not a representative relation of one thing standing in *for* another.'<sup>175</sup> In stating what becoming is not and by listing all of the familiar and historical tropes of imitation and anthropomorphization of animal othering, Deleuze and Guattari point to the liminal spaces in between all of these states, finding 'zones of proximity, indiscernibility or indifferentiation where one can no longer distinguish from *a* woman, *an* animal, or *a* molecule – neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen.'<sup>176</sup> Deleuze and Guattari look squarely at what is uncertain and indeterminate, where the territorial boundaries are blurred, or even removed altogether:

A becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, a limit, an identification...To become is not to progress or regress along a series. Above all becoming does not occur in the imagination, or even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic dreams

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., Deleuze, G and Guattari, F (2004) p263

<sup>175</sup> Leonard Lawlor (2008), 'Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari' in *SubStance*, Issue 117 (Volume 37, Number 3), University of Wisconsin Press. pp169-187;

<sup>176</sup> Gilles Deleuze, (1997), *Essays Critical and Clinical*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. P1

or dynamic level...Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor fantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not 'really' become an animal any more than the animal 'really' becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing more than itself...The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not.<sup>177</sup>

In spite of this extensive catalogue of negative definitions, Lawlor argues that becoming is only possible 'if a work (oeuvre) is produced...a becoming is only successful if writing results.'<sup>178</sup> While the aspiration to transcend and resist representations of a becoming experience is central to the theory, Claire Colebrook rightly asserts that the artist and writer must simply conclude that 'we do not actually want to be a molecule or animal, for this would mean not writing at all.'<sup>179</sup> The kind of freedom that becoming brings with it requires moving beyond the human. For Deleuze, literature and all creative practices are essential to this process. Becoming is a complete overthrow of the obstacles to the continuous flow of life, which for him are humanism and subjectivism. It is also important not to replace the privileged image of 'man' with another cultural or historical model but to think without models, axioms or grounds. Philosophy, art and science are the powers of becoming where affects can be created which in turn change our perception of what we take experience to be. In literature, and in all art forms, it is the potentialities of 'things',

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2004), p262.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., Lawlor, (2008) p170

<sup>179</sup> Colebrook, C., (2002) *Gilles Deleuze*, Routledge: London, p128

the experience of sensibilities, possibilities, imperceptibilities, variations, mutations and singularities that are presented that allow perception to be opened to the virtual.

In Franz Kafka's work for example, Deleuze and Guattari focus on the moments when he imagined being an insect, a machine or a burrowing animal, and shows how we can recognize ourselves 'as nothing more than a flow of images, the brain being one image among others, one possible perception and not *the origin of perceptions*.'<sup>180</sup> In these actions, Claire Colebrook observes 'the human becomes more than itself, or expands to its highest power, not by affirming its humanity, nor by returning to animal state, but by becoming-hybrid with what is not itself...using the human power of imagination to overcome the human' and moving away completely from a moralizing perspective.<sup>181</sup> It is in this gesture of overcoming of the human, and all of its psychological difficulties which Deleuze finds fascinating in Kafka and which I find finely developed in Coates. Beginning early in a performance for film titled *Finfock* (2003), before he acquired the deer skin and took a course in shamanism, Coates was already practicing becoming-animal at a primary and experimental level, without any of the accoutrements that may identify his practice now. He plainly describes his understanding of becoming and how he adopts the idea like this:

Becoming animal suggests a progression from one state of being to another, from one's consciousness to another's – specifically that of different species. The attempted leap between these is of interest to me. One skill I have developed and it is probably the reason why I chose to be an artist is the conscious study and practice of moving between personas and positions of identification. This

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., Colebrook, p128 (italics added)

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., Colebrook, p129

along with an interest in natural history has led me to adopt 'becoming animal' as an investigative device. More recently I have looked at the historical use for becoming animal particularly shamanism and have started to employ this 'skill' in society as a direct benefit for communities.<sup>182</sup>

In this succinct description, there is an emphasis on physical and conceptual movement, progression, and development that are central to the dynamics of performance and becoming. For Deleuze and Guattari movement between entities forms a sequence of alliances and involutions that are by their nature creative and occur 'by transversal communications between heterogeneous populations.'<sup>183</sup> In the creation of new alliances and assemblages, movement involves 'perpetual relations of transformation, conversion, jumping, falling, and rising' which all the time runs the risk of being botched or blocked. Interrupting the immanent flow of becoming by botching it can, Baker says, become 'a creative procedure precisely because of its provisional, playful, loosely experimental operation.'<sup>184</sup> As we have seen in the major pieces, *Journey* and *Radio Shaman*, which Coates developed into further stage performances and festival residencies, he plays fast and loose with botched taxidermy in his costumes that use the skins of badgers, hares and the spectacular deer skin with antlers. He also botches the neo-shamanic ritual skills of drumming (on a cassette tape), cleaning (using vacuum cleaner), and bells (shaking car keys). What he does not botch is his repertoire of animal calls and voices, which breaks the performance away from kitsch and claims an authenticity and a seriousness for the action. The trance at least appears genuine, as the artist is lost to us eyes closed and emitting strangely moving barks and squawks with a clear empathic quality. As he

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<sup>182</sup> Aloï, G (2007), 'In conversation with Marcus Coates', *Antennae*, Issue 4, Winter. p33

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F., (2004), p163

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., Baker (2000a) p64

returns from the journey, his description of the communication he found with the animal spirits is profoundly empathic and sincere. In a simultaneous act of contradicting and embroiling himself in the definitions of a Deleuzian becoming, he strikes a new position in an assemblage of representation, mimicry, empathy and schizoid behaviour. In the authenticity of his animal acoustics he abandons human language (which is 'majoritarian' or powerful) in favour of the language of creaturely vocalizations (which is 'minoritarian' or marginal). This creatural repertoire fulfills Deleuze and Guattari's criterion for 'minor' interventions in culture, namely 'the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.'<sup>185</sup>

Prior to this culmination of behaviours, botchings and sophistication of his repertoire, in 2003 Coates created *Finfolk*, a short performance (7mins, 38sec) on the icy shore of the North Sea where he emerges from the water fully clothed in an athlete's track suit and climbs the boat ladder up the pier wall and stands before us, grinning. Soaked through, he begins to amble about muttering and spitting in a casual manner. He walks to the shoreline between sea and land and makes some ungainly, almost slapstick dance movements. As we get closer we hear the strange sounds he is making that I have transcribed here as;

Fin Fin Fok Fok Fuk FOFOFO Fin Flak Flak Splak FOFOFO

and which are spat out with the urgency of a curse. His mouth is spit-flecked and frothing, his teeth and tongue snap out the syllabic nonsense and for a moment it is this intense communication that is all we are asked to focus on. Then he sees a family

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<sup>185</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., (1986) *Kafka: toward a minor literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p18

group approaching him and clambers back into the water and disappears. In the film of the piece the last frame shows a seal, its head bobbing out in the water looking to shore. In this experiment with mythology and animal-becoming, *Finfock* draws directly from the Icelandic-Scottish-Irish narrative of the 'selkie', a seal that can become human and a human that can become a seal. The selkie is never half human or a physical hybrid but either one physical manifestation or the other. As a human the selkie must always keep and bury on the shore his or her seal skin, in order to return to the water. Coates is selecting this imagined moment of transition to perform the figure of the shape shifter where he is not fully one thing or another. In appearance he is a human but his tongue is still tied to the sea. Only by disentangling one language from the other will the selkie achieve its full becoming one way or the other. Ron Broglio writes that 'Coates looks like an idiot; his words as a finfolk do not make sense' but deduces that 'it is precisely this nonsense that is the fulcrum by which Coates leverages and jostles the human and animal worlds.'<sup>186</sup> Everything becomes botched: the myth, the metamorphosis, the human voice and the seal voice, folklore, film and performance itself but the piece 'holds together' in its assemblage of intensities. Coates disrupts speech in a manner similar to Deleuze and Guattari description of how Kafka 'pulls from the language tonalities lacking in signification; the words themselves are not 'like' the animals but in their own way climb about, bark and roam around' in an 'asignifying intensive utilization of language.'<sup>187</sup>

In the doomed figures of the shaman clown, the lay philosopher artist and the hoaxer trickster that we see in the performance work of Coates, he activates a disturbance of

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<sup>186</sup> Broglio, R. (2011) *Surface encounters: thinking with animals and art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p110

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, p22



myth, a schizoid relationship to language and acoustics, and a desire to escape and a desire to fall over in a slapstick tragedy. In *Finfolk* this slipping in and out of the water and in and out of human skin and human language is also the slipping away from the rational and into the splitting of the person, like Flaubert's saint wanting to split himself in pieces, to be part of everything, 'to penetrate each atom, to descend to the bottom of matter, to *be* matter.'<sup>188</sup> This overly-empathic hypersensitive human seal is losing himself in the fringes of Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis. Perspectives are skewed, appearances are breaking down and the ambitions of becoming-animal are botched into a track-suited, sea-soaked savant trying to become a human man, perhaps the most botched becoming of all.

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<sup>188</sup> Flaubert quoted in Callois (1984) p31. Emphasis in original.

## Chapter Four.

### Becoming Canine: The scandal of the singing animal body.

*'Although I was profoundly confused by the sounds that accompanied them  
...they were dogs nevertheless, dogs like you and me.'*  
Franz Kafka *Investigations of a Dog*

*'I am the dog. No, the dog is himself and I am the Dog.  
O, the dog is me and I am myself.'*  
William Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

At the end of Alexander Raskatov's opera *A Dog's Heart* (2010), the figure of a dog is lying at the feet of his master in front of a warm fire on a salubrious drawing room stage set. In his short on-stage life this stray dog has been homeless, starving, scalded with boiling water and left for dead. He has been rescued by a famous eugenics surgeon, Professor Preobrazhensky, who replaces the dog's pituitary gland and testicles with those of a dead alcoholic balalaika-player with a criminal record. Following the surgery the dog, named Sharik, mutates into a man, becoming Comrade Sharikov. While he continues to live with his surgeon-father, Sharikov gets a job as Head of the sub-department of Moscow Pest Control. His anarchic vandalism, womanizing and vodka drinking quickly become a serious problem for the surgeon whose bourgeois status in a newly emerging Soviet Russia is precarious enough. The surgeon and his assistant soon decide to reverse the surgery. The operation is a success. In this last scene of the opera, Sharik, now reverted to a mongrel dog considers his fortune at the feet of the kind, sausage-providing master and decides

that in the end, being *in* the drawing room with the human is better than being *out* in the Moscow cold. He sings, 'I'm so lucky, simply incredibly lucky.'<sup>189</sup>

Raskatov's opera is an adaptation of Mikhail Bulgakov's (1891-1940) novella *A Dog's Heart* (1924), a short satire of the growing pains of Bolshevik society. After Bulgakov's first reading of the work in his flat for his friends, it was immediately confiscated and banned and remained unpublished in Russia until 1987. The story was never published anywhere in Bulgakov's lifetime. The (2010) English National Opera production of Raskatov's interpretation was originally commissioned from the composer by De Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam. The dog puppet created for this ENO/Complicite production by Blind Summit Theatre was inspired by an Alberto Giacometti (1901-966) bronze sculpture of an emaciated, almost skeletal dog (1957, Collection MoMa New York). So as it lies there on stage in the beginning (in agony) and at the end (in ecstasy) it is already twice removed from any direct sense of dog-ness as a puppeteer's translation of an artist's impression of a dog in another time and for a different purpose. Giacometti's sculpture is a complete work of visual art in its understanding of what it might be like to be a dog. This grey puppet from Blind Summit's studio lacks substance with its barely-there bony body. It is difficult to see on stage. A gang of puppeteers are in constant attendance in as they manipulate the puppet's every move. Unlike a strung marionette or some type of independently moving animatron the grey dog's stage presence is very much diffused by its design. Physically this puppet version of Sharik weakens the potential for presence on the stage. But acoustically he is a revelation.

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<sup>189</sup> Mikhail Bulgakov (1925, 2007) *A Dog's Heart*, London: Penguin Classics. p113

From the very first appearance of Sharik it is with his voice that he claims the stage. In Act One, the composer has given the dog's character a double voice – soprano and counter-tenor. As the puppet growls in anger and cries in pain in equal measure, these two voices circle around him and establish the complex persona that is to become Sharikov the dog-man anarchist. From the outset Raskatov is going against the grain of the conventions of the opera house. In this work the main character is a scalded feral street dog, the prima donna is wandering around in a trench coat and galoshes barking into a megaphone and the only reprieve is a sweet voiced counter-tenor whimpering about sausages as the snow falls on a back street in nineteen-twenties Moscow.

In the finale, writes Edward Seckerson, 'man and beast become indistinguishable and images of Soviet workers are superimposed with those of dogs like Sharik and a whole clutch of megaphones turn the chanting into a bestial wailing.'<sup>190</sup> The animal acoustics at work here are entirely human in their creation and interpretation. In this chapter through a close reading of Raskatov's radical new work, I aim to contextualize this composer's intense re-imagining of Bulgakov's creature within the long history and narrative of the onstage canine, both musical and silent. In my reading, the opera becomes a precarious hybridization of canine stage biographies and performing dog histories, Victorian and Soviet romanticization of stray dogs and their autobiographies, eugenics and vivisection, and how the medium of the opera is uniquely able to bear the risk of placing at its centre the scandal of a singing dog.

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<sup>190</sup> Edward Seckerson, *Raskatov, A Dog's Heart, English National Opera* (2010) <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/reviews/raskatov-a-dogs-heart-english-national-opera-2140048.html>

In a musicological context Raskatov's opera tests the boundaries of the stage where singing animals are, in general, stereotypical familiars (as we have seen with birds). In his treatment of the subject of animal suffering and social upheaval, Raskatov stands apart from a generation of composers like Jonathan Harvey and R. Murray Shaffer who have been carving some space for musical events that reflect their intense interest in the eco-musicological where (recorded) animal acoustics play a literal re-sounding part. Their work is in many ways indebted to Thomas Sebeok's influential scientific writings on animal communication and on 'bio-acoustics' in particular.<sup>191</sup> There is a concern for the diminishing ecological status of the sound world by which animals identify their environment, as renowned musician and naturalist Bernie Krause's book has so thoroughly investigated.<sup>192</sup> In contrast, Alexander Raskatov shows no particular fondness or support for his singing animal subject. Indeed, as I will argue, it is Sharik's marked indifference to the conventions and concerns of human life that radicalizes him within the history of onstage dog figures and it is this indifference that also ensures his survival. In a further twisting of the traditional characterizations of dramatized dogs, it is the human's disregard for the dog's voice when he does speak and the rejection of his position and his needs that thwart our expectations. Ultimately the animal finds a home in spite of all that happens to him and the almost total lack of sympathy for his plight. Raskatov's operatic version of Bulgakov's satire on Soviet social re-ordering explodes narrow readings of animal-as-symbol. As a trainee medic himself, and as a nephew of an

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<sup>191</sup> Sebeok, Thomas A. (1968) *Animal Communication*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

<sup>192</sup> Bernie Krause (2012) *The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the origins of Music in the World's Wild places*, London: Profile Books. pp222-226

esteemed progressive surgeon, Bulgakov strays from the conventional scientific milieu that surrounded him in his critique of scientific experimentation on animals even while exploiting its symbolic value in his criticism of the emerging new Soviet state. Both works (opera and novella) position the social and scientific horror of the dog's life as a real, feeling member of a society that is in revolution. Sharik's vocal persona and what he has to say separates him from his canine onstage brethren and their mute appearances. He is a usurper of both traditional and contemporary artistic interpretations of the stray dog, where convention repeats narratives of rescue, domestication and contractual rewards for good behaviour. In what follows I reposition the singing dog-man creature in a strong connection with the irreverent dog on the Elizabethan stage and trace his departure from stereotypes of the well behaved faithful dog of stage and screen that began to appear and has sustained as a trope since the late 1700s. Instead, like his early modern predecessor, Sharik bucks the trend of obedience and becomes a channel for anarchy.

### **A Life of Its Own, Regardless.**

In the many written accounts of dogs on stage and in performative contexts in general, silence and reliability are the traits most treasured in the canine actor. Most animals in performance practices including circuses share this trait of convenient muteness while becoming spectacularly symbolic. This holds, I believe, for both living and artificial animals and in this chapter I will move freely from one to the other in order to deepen this investigation into representations of animality in a variety of performance contexts.

Onstage animals rarely raise vocal objection to their role in the performance because they have been well trained for the task. Live dogs are especially prized and

spectacularized because they are at once both fully 'animal' and familiar 'companion', real and imagined, domestic and theatrical. Erica Fudge reminds us that for the canine onstage, as well as being a representation of friendship, 'it is the reality of the animal that *is* his meaning' and this reality is most explicitly tested in Shakespeare's play *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (c.1590) with the character of a dog called Crab.<sup>193</sup> This particular Elizabethan animal player emerges in a period when dogs were popular contributors to elaborate theatrical treatments of historical events, romantic tales and the occasional Greek tragedy. Whole packs of hounds were included to demonstrate a hunting scene (in *Palaemon and Arcyte*, 1566) or to perform as an individual living prop accompanying a shepherdess as a symbol of fidelity (in *Il Pastor Fido*, c.1586). By the time Crab wanders on to a piazza in *Verona* the persona, and indeed dramatic duty of the onstage dog was well established and well sought after - not for the skill of its performance but for the total absence of one (States, 1983).

Elizabethan audiences preferred their stage dogs to be absolutely uncomplicated living beings, wholly themselves and behaving as they wish, while on stage.

Performing tricks or enacting clever deeds was both unwelcome and unheard of.

Dogs and hounds were to be themselves, not to play themselves and especially not to 'play dead'. In Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* (at both the Globe and at Court in 1599) the knight Puntarvolo's greyhound is given a fatal poison but it is led off stage on a string before it 'dies' in the text and thus remains, as Michael Dobson describes 'strictly an accessory, a mute externalization of Puntravolo's folly'.<sup>194</sup> In

Dobson's illuminating essay, he outlines how dogs in this period were mostly paraded

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<sup>193</sup> Erica Fudge, (2007) *The Dog is himself: Humans, Animals and self-control in The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in *How to do things with Shakespeare* Laurie Maguire ed., Oxford: Blackwell, pp185-209

<sup>194</sup> Michael Dobson, (2000) 'A Dog at all Things' in *Performance Research* 5(2), pp116-124, Taylor & Francis Ltd

and displayed but were also expected to bring the scene 'to life' through the material body of the silent non-performing dog. This was the intellectual frisson audiences of the period were exercised about and dog owners were very well paid for their keeping their animals ignorant of the follies of the theatre. In my reading of this history the onstage canine's principle task was to remain an unutterable fact within the spoken fiction of the spectacle.

In *Verona*, Shakespeare makes it clear that the dog is not even house-trained and Launce's monologues draw attention to his canine companion's total lack of performance skills. Crab is given nothing to do except appear beside his 'master' Launce who describes his dog's misbehaviour, his troublemaking and not least his disregard for Launce's emotional state in two long speeches. In Fudge's reading, she focuses with precision on the one point where Launce castigates Crab for urinating against the underskirts of a Lady that Launce wishes to court and interprets the incident as a moment which increases the farcical progressions of the play, and of the play within the play. Crab, via the text, appears ever more mystified as to his function in the drama. The more Launce castigates the dog for his inaction the more Crab as an actual living animal reveals that, for Shakespeare, his function is just to exist, to play against the play, and as best he can, to hold off from doing anything he might be inclined to do (such as relieve himself or fall asleep) or anything else that might actually qualify as performing (Fudge, 2007; Dobson, 2000). The presence of the live dog in *Verona*, and his unruly behavior 'signals in the most explicit way', what Fudge calls 'the very real danger of incivility that hangs over the drama.'<sup>195</sup> For Fudge the urinating dog (though we never see this action) is Shakespeare's way of reminding us

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid Fudge (2007) p189



that we are fragile, barely domesticated creatures ourselves and may not know what we are doing in general no any more than the dog knows what he is doing in this play. The creation of Crab occurs at the beginning of a long line of Shakespearean dog references that connect human and animal species in order to illustrate the difficulty of what is to be a human. Shakespeare begins his menagerie of animals with the actual living dog in *Verona*. By the time we get to the Heath in *Lear* animals, humans and climactic forces and their qualities have become completely ensnared in the language Shakespeare uses to describe his human protagonists and especially their *condition*. But rather than just reading this zoography as a cache of anthropomorphic insults using animal natures and appearances to degrade the human character, perhaps, as Fudge suggests, Shakespeare is revealing his exemption of the animal from the torment of humanity. The playwright grabs at animal characteristics and perceived foibles of other species as a means of rebellion against changing perceptions of humanity, namely emerging enlightenment philosophies, that surrounds him. He positions the human as the abject exception to the rule of nature, one who has no command, who contradicts and confounds instinct and psychologically and physically violates the body and it's politic. With Shakespeare the universal human in all its situations ultimately becomes a creature without the capacity to become an animal.

In her zoographic reading of *King Lear*, Laurie Shannon exposes a cross-species platform where the human, the declaimed exception, becomes a negativized, prostrate creature, far removed from the vertical directionality of the newly Enlightened human body emerging in this period and its 'ontological movement

towards divinity.’<sup>196</sup> For Shannon, in the abject status of Lear, Edgar, Fool and others in this play it is the human that is exposed as unspeakably impoverished. King Lear, she writes, ‘calculates man’s pathetic condition when unsubsidized by animal debt: ‘Thou ows’t the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.’<sup>197</sup> In this stripping away of what little protection parts of an animal’s body can give the human, ‘in its flagrant insufficiency, (the human) is barely an animal at all.’<sup>198</sup> In Launce’s more comedic declaration, he expresses these confused identifications when he worries if ‘I am the dog. No the dog is himself and I am the dog. O, the dog is me, and I am myself.’ For poor Launce however the ‘flagrant insufficiency’ here is that ‘the dog all this while sheds not a tear, nor speaks a word’ of comfort to Launce while he ‘lays the dust’ with his tears. Shakespeare makes it clear that it is imperative in both action and word that the dog remains a silent, indifferent observer to the trials of his human companion.

In a production of *King Lear* at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, directed by Selina Cartmell (2013), a pair of Irish Wolfhounds were led through the set at various points during

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<sup>196</sup> Laurie Shannon’s zoographical catalogue of animal references in *King Lear* alone is quite astonishing in its breadth as it includes ‘dragons, monsters, brutish villains, goatish dispositions, the Dragon’s Tail and Ursa Major, mongrels, curs, coxcombs, apish manners, hedge-sparrows, cuckoos, asses, horses, sea-monsters, detested kites, serpent’s teeth, wolfish visages, foxes, oysters, snails, a mongrel bitch, wagtails, rats, halcyon beaks, geese, bears, monkeys, ants, eels, sharp-toothed unkindness, vultures, wolves, owls, creatures, lions, cocks, lice, pelicans, hogs, dolphins, worms, sheep, civet cats, house cats, mastiffs, greyhounds, spaniels, bobtail tikes, swimming frogs, toads, tadpoles, wall-newts, mice, deer, vermin, nightingales, herring, boarish fangs, cowish terror, tigers, prey, dog-hearted daughters, crows, choughs, beetles, larks, wrens, furred gowns, swine, adders, butterflies, toad-spotted traitors, a dog, a horse, and a rat. This is not to count repetitions of these names or foul fiends, incubi, centaurs, demons, and spirits—to whatever taxonomic or cosmic order they may belong.’ See Laurie Shannon (2009) ‘Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of *King Lear*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 60, Number 2, Summer 2009, pp168-196, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., Shannon, p196.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

scene changes and then lounged around on stage with their cloaked handler for the entire two twenty-minute intervals. These huge animals were mesmerizing in their hairy physicality, their toenails clacking across the stage and their tongues panting and drooling under the heat of the lights. The overall production was confusing and over-wrought but the interval non-act with the wolfhounds was truly Shakespearean. Those of us who sat riveted by the dogs during the interval secretly knew that each dog was yawning and wagging his tale in the fullest dog-knowledge that he was still himself alive - be it on stage, in the street, in his living room, or in another theatre. For Bert O. States the thrill in seeing the onstage Elizabethan dog, like these hounds in the Abbey or like Crab in the Globe, is how liveness plays with illusion. States suggests that the theatre may think it has 'stolen' something from the real world to show how remarkably it can cope with these levels of risk. However the audience is more excited by how 'the theatre has, so to speak, met its match: the dog is "blissfully" above, or beneath, the business of playing and we find ourselves cheering its performance precisely because there isn't one.'<sup>199</sup> For States this phenomenological question centres on theatrical experience itself and what is at stake for the co-contributors to this life-world fabulation. In Crab, he finds the 'intersection of two independent and self-contained phenomenal chains, natural animal behavior and culturally programmed human behavior.'<sup>200</sup> What is crucial for this kind of premise to succeed is that the dog behaves with complete indifference to what is going on around him, remaining somehow pure as the human performers turn themselves inside out to try and get to their target.

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<sup>199</sup> Bert O. States (1983) 'The Dog on Stage: Theatre as Phenomenon'. *New Literary History*, Vol 14. No.2, On Convention:II pp373-388

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., States, p369

For Dobson, 'nothing gives a more convincing impression of having a life of its own regardless of the demands of dramatic convention than an untrained dog brought onto a stage.'<sup>201</sup> This idea of 'having a life of its own *regardless*' locates a unique autonomy in the character of Crab in *Verona* and, in my view, is also at the centre of Sharik the stray in Bulgakov's *Moscow* and Raskatov's opera. I argue that there is a vital connection between Crab and Sharik across a broad historical period but perhaps not such a wide human-animal gap. In both live and imagined characters their disregard or regardless-ness for what is going on around them is what will get them through this ordeal with the chaotic human and its circumstances and its disastrous approach to social life, even on stage. Voicing the animal's intentionality in these dramas becomes the unruly spark that ignites tensions of and about species hierarchies, wisdom and politics in both works.

With Shakespeare's Crab it appears that the secret to getting through this strange situation is to do nothing and say nothing and therefore remain blissfully unaffected by the drama. For Launce 'tis a foul thing when a cur cannot keep himself in all companies' by being both unhygienic and unaffected by social niceties. Crab, he says, fails to properly comply with his position as servant to his master by not speaking a word of condolence or shedding a tear. While Crab's onstage moment depends on his presence signifying the absence of a performance, his master Launce's admonishment could well be applied to Bulgakov's Sharik who goes through such extreme physical trauma and torture. Sharik should be listening to Launce who advises his dog to be someone who 'takes upon him, as one should say, one that takes upon him to be a Dog indeed, to be as it were, a Dog at all Things (*Verona*,4.4).' When his ordeal is over

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., Dobson, p119

Sharik decides that his best option, in spite of his humanized experience, is in fact to behave more like a dog at all things and less like the frustrated New Soviet human citizen conflicted with concepts of freedom, standardization of social living and learning political opinion from a manual.

### **The rise of the Dog Star and his biographers.**

The potential for canine indifference to the activities and desires of the human players in any performance context, be it Crufts dog championship or the Globe theatre, is a crucial element to the success or failure of either event. For the early modern audience, playing against the stereotypical subservient dog further fuelled the delight of any dog 'owners' who knew full well that this animal is capable of mischief, heedlessness and political bias in real time. In Crab, Shakespeare's canine actor is made *do* nothing but must *be* something exquisitely spectacular for its audience- that is, to be really convincingly alive, which in itself in any performance context is so desirable and so difficult. In Dobson's survey of 'the transformation of the onstage canine' from animal to actor, dogs did not become performers until after 1760, and the 'rise of the dog star' initiated legislation of labour laws for theatrical animal workers. By 1784 a poodle named Moustache was earning £7000 profit a year for Sadler's Wells as principal performer of an entire troupe of uniformed retrievers who nightly attacked a fort in Charles Dibdin's play *The Deserter* (Dobson, 2000). Moustache's career was followed by an even more astounding performance by a dog called Carlo and the introduction of a new genre - 'dog drama' - in a play called *The Caravan* (1803) written for Carlo by Frederick Reynolds. At the climax of the play, set in the outskirts of Barcelona, Carlo dives into a vat of water to rescue the daughter of the Marquis of Calatrava. According to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the commercial

success of this dog drama saved the theatre from ruin and Carlo became ‘the author and preserver of Drury Lane’, ensuring his celebrated status as actor, saviour of theatre and his vocation to the stage.<sup>202</sup>

The newly celebrated onstage dog star became a fertile subject for an emerging popular genre of animal ‘autobiography’. The imagined vocations and theatrical adventures of the dog actor and the scale of his adoring audience was inevitably going to be fictionalized. In 1804 Elizabeth Fenwick’s book *The Life of The Famous Dog Carlo* differs from many of the sentimental biographies of faithful dogs that were beginning to be published in this period. Fenwick’s first person narrative of Carlo’s life is not a work of great literature by any means and was written as means to make some money – (Fenwick had no connection to Carlo but was struggling to find ways to live independently as a teacher, librarian and eventually as an actor in the West Indies). But what marks her book as unique is the way in which Carlo discusses his experience of life from puppyhood to his early adventures as preparation for this feted performance in *The Caravan*. In Fenwick’s story we have the vocational intention of the artist. Everything in his life made sense when he was finally cast in the play to save the Marquis’s daughter from drowning. Carlo’s career continued with many more shows developed especially for him and he had a long stage life performing all over Britain until at least 1827.<sup>203</sup> Only because of the shift in function

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<sup>202</sup> From notes on Eliza Fenwick’s *The Life of the Famous Dog Carlo* (1804) on Centre for Textual Studies, DeMontfort University’s Hockliffe Project. <http://hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0162.html>

<sup>203</sup> From Two framed playbills featuring animal performers, real or imagined. The first, Theatre Royal, Birmingham, 8 Aug. 1827, starring Mr. Blanchard as well as Mr. Simpson & “his Wonderful DOG.” The latter appears in *Woodman & his Dog, Or, The Castle of Rocella*, a melodrama written expressly for the famous performing dog, Carlo. The final scene represents “The Castle in Flames, In which surprising Feats of Sagacity will be displayed by the WONDERFUL DOG CARLO.” From the catalogue of: *EARLY AMERICAN AND BRITISH POPULAR AMUSEMENT* An exhibit from the personal collection of Professor

of the dog on stage – from spectacular ‘liveness’ to acting animality – did the animal ‘autobiography’ become possible in literature. These nineteenth century dog actors were no longer admired for being dogs of the everyday but for how wonderfully close to mindful humans, as actors, they had become.

From Carlo through to René de Pixérécourt’s (1814) popular play *The Dog Of Montargis* where a silent dog defends a mute man wrongly accused of murdering a knight, even up to Uggie, the dog star who saves the main character from a burning building in Michel Hazanavicius’s (2011) silent film *The Artist*, dogs have been working long and hard on stage and on screen as lively allegories of fidelity to the human and by extension a living testament to the human’s benign but exceptional understanding of and control over the animal other. Silence is less of a feature of dogs in literature where talking-dog stories became classics for Cervantes, Hoffmann, Gogol, and Kafka. The comedic values that a dog might speak are secondary to the perspectives these literary dogs have given on moral attitudes, scientific taxonomies, social systems and how we humans may or may not adapt to modernity. In Hoffman’s story, the wandering stray ends up on the stage. The other talking dogs find various employments but invariably lose hope for humankind and return to a life on the streets. They are united in their experience of the world and the wisdom they gain from interaction with human life informs how they determine their next move. For Kafka, this move is away from enlightenment and something that his dog narrator is unable to bear.

In Franz Kafka's (1883-1924) short story *The Investigations of a Dog*, an inquisitive young pup lives an ordinary life until he encounters seven artistic dogs in a woodland clearing performing mysterious ritual movements while producing musical sounds that overwhelm the young dog and the experience changes him forever. Written in 1922, two years before Kafka died, his canine autobiography is one of the writer's longest short stories and certainly one of the strangest even by Kafka's standards. It is also a moving tale of frustration, education, art and freedom. The story is entirely narrated in the first person by the nameless dog who from the outset describes in detailed long paragraphs how his encounter with the musical performing dogs was a contradiction in itself because 'they did not speak, they did not sing, they remained generally silent, almost determinedly silent: but from the empty air they conjured music.'<sup>204</sup> From the beginning we are in a territory of dualistic complexities: silent voices, animal cultures, physical transcendences and not least, the vocalized performance of canine autobiographies.

In the pup's *Investigations* the source of the music is unknown. There are no visible mouths singing or any evidence of musical instruments in the description of the physical performances of the seven dogs. Their voices and music emerge out of nothing. This event determines the pup's agenda as he sets out on his epistemological quest to find the source of this mystical canine acoustic world. He has little interest in the ritual spectacle itself or the artistry of the pack of seven dogs in whose performance 'everything was music, the lifting and setting down of their feet, certain turns of the head...the positions they took up in relation to one another, the

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<sup>204</sup> Kafka, F (1922, 2005) *The Investigations of a Dog*, *The Complete Short Stories*, London: Vintage, p281.



symmetrical patterns they produced.’<sup>205</sup> The experience of the sound was so physically overwhelming for the hapless young dog that it was this immersive impact that changed the course of his life and certainly the course of his thinking:

...my mind could attend to nothing but this blast of music which seemed to come from all sides, from the heights, from the depths, from everywhere, surrounding the listener, overwhelming him, crushing him, and over his swooning body still blowing fanfares so near that they seemed far away and almost inaudible...the music robbed me of my wits.<sup>206</sup>

What impresses the dog is not so much that the Mysterious Seven are able to make such powerful music and make it invisibly, but more the demonstration of their ‘courage in facing so openly the music of their own making, and their power to endure it calmly without collapsing.’<sup>207</sup> The performance speaks to him uniquely and especially and can in turn speak to a reader that remembers how it is receive and to give and to be implicated and enmeshed in live performance events.

The dog in *Investigations* becomes acutely aware of the strength of spirit in the performers, of their control over the phenomenon of their actions and of how they can bear the consequences of their display, which, he now knows, flies in the face of the common good - not against society, but maybe in spite of it. In the last line of the story Kafka suggests that it may have something to do with the idea of freedom. But not before the dog has thoroughly tested his research at great length against other questions such as where does food come from and is there any relationship between the origins of food and music. Mladen Dolar suggests that for Kafka’s dog, ‘food, pure

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., Kafka, p281

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p282

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

materiality and immanence, will suddenly point to the transcendence' of the musical performance and that the voice, maybe even his own musical voice 'is the source of food he has been seeking. There is an overlapping, an intersection between nourishment and voice.'<sup>208</sup> The dog also mentions leaving his childish concerns behind after the Mysterious Seven Dogs event, and that concerning oneself about food sources might indeed be an infantile preoccupation and that 'there are more important things than childhood.'<sup>209</sup> For Dolar this is one of Kafka's greatest sentences 'in our time of a general infantilization of social life...a time which loves to take the despicable line that we are all children in our hearts' and therefore Dolar is on the side of the young dog who decides to grow up and to begin his investigations. He pursues his quest as an aware adult dog.<sup>210</sup> This, Dolar identifies, is also the slogan of Lacanian psychoanalysis that seeks to leave infant histories behind and fully enter into the problematics of the conscious adult world. But Kafka's story suggests that this will not be easily achieved and certainly not without a significant degree of alteration and great personal sacrifice. The relentless noise of the chattering voices of the innocent, uninitiated dogs affects this dog to such an extent that he abandons his *Investigations*. He is reconciled to take a limited approach within his canine consciousness and, importantly especially in Kafka, within his social circumstances – albeit with one last word about possessing at least a knowledge of freedom. For Kafka and for the reader there is the slight hope that maybe an experience of music, ritualization, starvation, bloodletting, and psychological interrogation of selfhood is not all in vain:

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<sup>208</sup> Mladen Dolar (2006) *A Voice and Nothing More*, Cambridge: MIT Press. p186.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., Kafka, p286

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Dolar, p186

Freedom! Certainly such freedom as is possible today is a wretched business.

But nevertheless freedom, nevertheless a possession.<sup>211</sup>

In this important sentence at end of the *Investigations*, the dog hints that perhaps even having an awareness of the existence of a more expanded consciousness, of a world beyond immediate basic existence might be in and of itself a kind of second cousin to liberation. The physical trauma, the dancing and the psychological expansion of mind go beyond observation and investigation because in the end one does 'possess' something - a knowledge through art - which cannot be taken away regardless of a social regime that is barely tolerable.

Kafka's dog's tone of voice changes in the course of the story from young naïve pup to mature almost world-weary adult animal. There is also a nuance of resignation in his voice and in the acknowledgement that he came close to something 'other', perhaps to a sense of becoming-with the Mysterious Seven (that none of his fellow dogs seemed to care about) and one that extends beyond the everyday experience of his species. Kafka's obscure tale of evolution and transformation of self has an echo in animal narrative literature. As Kafka's story of dog-pack becomings was added to his posthumous archive, Michael Bulgakov was simultaneously creating another canine autobiography, *A Dog's Heart* (1924), reading it aloud to a small audience in his Moscow flat and not knowing that its destiny was to be scandalized to silence. Kafka's canine biography, like Bulgakov's, is so unusual that it cannot be easily included in the catalogue of Victorian dog 'auto-biographies' that had become so popular prior to the publication of these two eccentric dog tales. The trials and devotions of canine companions were a hugely popular genre of literature in the late nineteenth century

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., Kafka, p316

where first person accounts of a dog's life and times are almost exclusively concerned with an old (male) dog's courage, unconditional love and infinite loyalty.

The fantasy of the narrating canine contradicts the reality a dog's life in this rather brutal period where strays were beaten or shot on sight on the streets of nineteenth-century England. In the conclusion to her essay *Dog Years, Human Fears* (2002), Theresa Magnum is not surprised 'that when mute or muted creatures speak, they speak in the voices of sentiment' expressing their fictional frailty after a lifetime of usefulness and obligation 'and a grim reminder that old age, like animal life, is a tableau that our culture prefers to see blind, silent and bathed in sentiment'. While these faithful dogs are given a voice and 'sensation, often pain, forms its language' it is at this point that the animal becomes 'companion' and willing to suffer for the sake of its companion's needs. Magnum cites Carlo's (Fenwick's) autobiography as a particular example of the quality that defines the genre, namely canine fidelity to the human.<sup>212</sup> While the 'autobiographies' continued to be popular and maintained the narrative of the devoted dog, the realities of the street dog's experience as a labourer or as an experimental animal in the science lab were as prevalent as the activism against these practices that grew alongside politicized action of women's suffrage. Suffragetism and the establishment of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) collide in historical time and are often linked in ways that may seem uncomfortable and confusing today but were consistently linked through the actions of individuals at the time. Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) epitomises these complexities as a formidable women's rights campaigner and member of the

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<sup>212</sup> Teresa Magnum (2002), 'Dog Years, Human Fears' in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels, Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p.45

executive council of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage as well as being the founder of the BUAV in 1898. According to Linda Birke, 'feminism was...part of a wider set of problems; animal cruelty reflected a greater barbarism leading to mistreatment of humans' and activists like Edith Goode (1882 – 1970) were among the first to talk about animals as citizens.<sup>213</sup> These initiatives eventually lead to the antivivisection Old Brown Dog Riots in Battersea Park in 1907 where student surgeons, suffragettes, animal rights campaigners, liberals, Marxists, police, trade unionists and members of Battersea Council engaged in a series of violent encounters. The reason for this anarchy was the installation of a memorial sculpture of a dog whose vivisection and death in University of London veterinary college instigated scandalous court cases that resulted in the removal and melting down of the metal sculpture. In the court cases against Ernest Starling (1866–1927), Professor of Physiology at University College, London, and his brother-in-law, William Bayliss (1860–1924), who were using vivisection on dogs to determine whether the nervous system controls pancreatic secretions, as postulated by Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936), the widely reported testimonies of witnesses to the experiments on the nameless Old Brown Dog are indeed gruesome.<sup>214</sup> I have detoured through this potent period in written animal biographies in order to show that in spite of the riots, the links to suffragetism and the establishment of several new animal welfare movements that continue to be active today, the literary genre of the benign, reminiscing, aging dog continued regardless. For example, Virginia Woolf's 'autobiography' of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's spaniel *Flush* (1933) is in effect an homage to the poet and her

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<sup>213</sup> Birke, Lynda (2000). "Supporting the underdog: feminism, animal rights and citizenship in the work of Alice Morgan Wright and Edith Goode", *Women's History Review*, Volume 9, Issue 4.

<sup>214</sup> Bayliss, William & Starling, Ernest (1902). "The mechanism of pancreatic secretion", *The Journal of Physiology*, 12;28(5):325–353. PMID 16992627

trouble with her father and her illnesses; Flush, after a lifetime of devotion is content to die of old age in the sun in a piazza in Tuscany knowing his mistress is safe and well. The hounds unleashed by Kafka and Bulgakov would be horrified by this kind of obsequiousness as they have physically and psychologically torn their own identities apart.

### ***Homo sovieticus or Homo cannis.***

In *A Dog's Heart* the animal's identity is unexpectedly expanded with his pivotal role in the Professor's developing experimental practice of replacing his human patient's organs with animal organs in a process of 'rejuvenation'. Yvonne Howell's reading of the novel positions eugenics at the centre of concern for Bulgakov as a writer with an interest in medicine and coinciding with the emergence of eugenics practices in post revolutionary Russia, full of promise of biological rejuvenation for a new healthy society. 'Biology is Destiny' she writes and the achievement of the experiment is the ability of the dog (and perhaps by inference, the peasant underclass) to speak for itself. There is a problem however that ultimately becomes the undoing of everybody including the surgeon, his assistant, Sharikov himself and especially the new bureaucracy that tries and fails to integrate him into its pages. Howell describes how 'the problem is that Sharikov, as a particular example of the miraculous leap from animal to man, opens his mouth initially and primarily to spew out obscenities.'<sup>215</sup> Historically the fundamental fact of language acquisition - as opposed to vocal or acoustic expression - declares the human and in turn reveals how language-less animals have been and continue to be uniquely useful in establishing strata and

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<sup>215</sup> Yvonne Howell (2006) 'Eugenics, Rejuvenation, and Bulgakov's Journey into the Heart of Dogness, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Autumn) pp544-562

schemes of human exceptionalism. When Sharikov the dog-man usurps the miracle of language granted to him by science by only speaking in profanities, he scandalizes the whole project. In fact the broader question about cultural programming and biological determining of human social behaviour that was occupying the minds of Russian intellectuals and eugenicists in this period now hinges on speech and language. Howell explains that 'the problem of language proves to be a powerful illustration of the futility of applying existing eugenic solutions to create the New Soviet Man...Any class based eugenics program designed to promote the proletariat will dissolve in a fatal paradox...Bad stock will most likely produce bad offspring, as in the case of Sharikov.'<sup>216</sup> In both the novel and the opera, no-one is surprised that the dog can speak, especially as he becomes more human-like. The new concern is more a question of what is he going to say and do now that his social status has risen. Howell concludes that for these Russian surgeons speech is universal but language is class-based and 'linguistic backwardness' is never going to be overcome by eugenics 'in the very class one is trying to promote to the vanguard of national identity.'<sup>217</sup> For Professor Preobrazhensky, the experiment is a further failure because of the very individual natures and traits that are fighting each other in the body of Sharikov. Preobrazhensky's goal was to improve humanity as a whole, not one peasant at a time. An individual can be transformed, but changing a society will take more than surgical rejuvenation experiments.

Language and its origins quickly becomes less of an enigma for the surgeon and his assistant, Dr Bormenthal, and more of an ethical nuisance. The urgency now is not

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., Howell, p556

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p555

how to teach the dog-man any more words but to find ways of shutting him up. For Bormenthal the drive of the project was rooted in their bio-scientific speculations on what makes a genius like Spinoza? What are the biological constituents that produce exceptional human thinking? However Bormenthal has little time to ponder on these matters. The reality of the physical horror and chaotic nature of their laboratory creation overtakes his philosophical meanderings. Bormenthal goes so far as to say that Spinoza was just a human man and no amount of eugenic manipulation can guarantee genius. This dog-man Sharikov is therefore an unknown philosophical entity. Even though we have heard the dog's own rather rough view of the world at the beginning of both opera and novel, Sharikov has clearly inherited his foul tongue from his biological donor, the criminal drunk Chugunov whose pituitary gland is now active in the dog-man's brain. There is no option left but to abandon the whole enterprise before Sharikov says anything more that will threaten the surgeon's reputation as well as the new social order. There is no room to accommodate or domesticate this kind of human-animal under the Housing Laws of the new administration nor is there any bureaucratic system in place for anyone to be entrusted with the concerns and ambitions of a talking dog. When Sharikov announces that he is engaged to his secretary at the Sub-Department of Pest Control and intends to start a family, the surgeon wastes no more time. Sharikov is cornered and then accepts his fate. In a tender turn it seems the burden of humanity has been weighing too heavily on him also, in spite of his efforts to be a good citizen and comrade. Following even more violent surgery he reverse-mutates into being a dog, (in a remarkable ten days). The last trace of his human self is his human voice. Soon this too will be lost to the growls and whimpers of Sharik the stray –beautifully interpreted by the soprano and the counter-tenor.



In the opera, the surgical procedures carried out on Sharik's brain and testicles are a frenzy of white-coated chorus men and women, descending on the animal body. Soon the stage becomes saturated with blood. In the novel, it is even more chilling and uncomfortable when the professor and his assistant begin 'tearing Sharik's body apart with hooks, scissors and some kind of clamps. Out slipped the pink and yellow tissues, weeping bloody dew. Fillip Filippovich twisted the knife in the body and then cried "Scissors!".'<sup>218</sup> By giving the screaming animal the voice of a counter-tenor (with its own testicular history), Raskatov shows that he is well aware of these uses and abuses of both the human and animal body for creative purpose. Opera has historically been considered a dangerous social practice (by religious bodies) or as a frustratingly beguiling nonsense (by philosophers such as Rousseau and Nietzsche and more recently Žižek and Dolar) mainly because of the threatened loss of intelligibility of the text and the casual regard of composers for the absolute power of the Word. This threat is most in evidence when representations of animals start singing on stage. The project becomes even more precarious when the singing animal starts making sense.

Operatic animals are usually to be found outside the human world - in Wagner (*Siegfried*), in Delibes (*Lakme*), in Mozart (*Die Zauberflöte*) and spectacularly in Braunfels (*Die Vögel*) – and in keeping with opera's classical or Greek origins, animals function very effectively as non-Greek or 'barbarian' voices within the drama or crisis on stage. In *Lakme* for example, the girl (once again) goes out to the forest to calm the beasts with her infamous 'Bell Song'. It is the singing (female) human voice that is

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<sup>218</sup> Mikhail Bulgakov (2007) *A Dog's Heart*, Penguin Classics: London. p46

quelling the barbarous multitudes. Barbarous is an echoic word reflective of strange tongues, but being barbarian is different to being an outsider. Walter J. Ong's definition of barbarian is 'more subtle and human, a cultural relationship focused in linguistic behaviour.' Ong's term, 'the barbarian within' is focused on speech and language ability where 'the barbarian is defined not in extrahuman geometrical terms', such as who is and who is not inside the city walls, 'but in terms derived from human life itself, from the eminently human activity of verbal communication.'<sup>219</sup> In this context I consider the medium of opera as an exciting and controversial barbaric practice where human speech and language are both distorted and detached from meaning through singing, especially as the vocal high note gained ground by baroque audiences seeking more extraordinary vocal virtuosity, or what Michel Poizat calls 'the angels cry'. The rapid development in early opera for foregrounding the soprano and castrato voices usurped the original 'Greek' ambitions of sung speech for the Florentine renaissance intellectuals who invented the art form. Instead, Poizat says, 'the distinction between humanity and animality collapses. The prelapsarian indifferentiation of the human and the animal comes at the cost of the renunciation of speech: Orpheus communicates with animals through his singing and the angels communicate among themselves without the intermediary of the spoken word.'<sup>220</sup> By giving the stray dog, Sharik, both a soprano and counter-tenor double-voice Raskatov is making his point – the animal only becomes a monster when he begins singing with the voice of a man. The chief character of his monstrous humanity is to lie about almost everything: his history, his name, his movements, his job at the Sub-

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<sup>219</sup> Walter J. Ong (1962) *The Barbarian Within*, New York: Macmillan p263

<sup>220</sup> Michel Poizat (1992) *The Angels's Cry. Beyond the pleasure principle in Opera*. New York: Cornell University Press, p44

Department of Pest Control, his identity papers, his love interests, his drinking and especially his future intentions. When Sharikov claims social status but behaves like an anarchist, his physical actions constantly undo his verbal promises to be a good human animal.

### **The scandal of the singing animal body.**

In Judith Butler's afterword for the 1994 publication of Shoshana Felman's book *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, Butler writes that 'the body is not "outside" the speech act.' So the body as an organism is recognized by Butler and Felman as being 'within' the actions and activities of speech. Judith Butler expands the idea by declaring that the body is 'at once the organ of speech, the very organic condition of speech, and the vehicle of speech, the body signifies the organic conditions of verbalization. So if there is no speech act without speech, and no speech without the organic, there is surely no speech act without the organic. But what does the organic dimension of speech do to the claims made in speech, and on behalf of speech?'<sup>221</sup> It's an essential question and by extension, I am asking what the organic dimension of speech does to the claims made in speech when the organic dimension, the organ of speech, is an animal body? What is different about the question of broken promises made with speech acts on stage when the exchange is between species? Perhaps it is not that different than an exchange between different sexes, if we follow Butler's line of enquiry. If the performance of gender creates gender then the performance of species could also create species. Could playing a dog, for that while, for what ever purposes, be a 'dog'? How could such a concept, as played out by artists imitating animals, bring us any

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<sup>221</sup> Shoshana Felman (2003) *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L.Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* . Stanford University Press : Stanford California.

closer to understanding what it might be like to perform a version of one's own species, or another species, if one was not human?

The core of the scandal in the performative act of speech is in the spoken promises that are made by speech and then broken by the body. Shoshana Felman uses the tale of Molière's *Don Juan* and Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* to illustrate her interpretation of J.L. Austin's theory of the promising, speaking body and how the body is made profane by its own actions, by promising one action and doing another. The 'I will say' and 'I will do' of the speaking body that can so easily break these promises through silent physical action usurps the human dependency on the authority of the spoken word. Felman reveals the fragility of speech-acts by placing them in an erotic or sensual context such as Don Juan's mouth. She explains how 'one might say that the Don Juan myth of the mouth is the precise place of mediation between language and the body. Don Juan's mouth is not simply an organ of pleasure and appropriation, it is also the speech organ *par excellence*, even the organ of seduction.'<sup>222</sup> We know we cannot trust Don Giovanni, as he repeatedly breaks every promise right up until the end of the opera and his own demise. In this context of mistrusting voices, I question whether we can trust our creative interpretations of animal acoustics as being anything other than a projection of human desire on to other species and an appropriation of their vocal worlds. In the final scenes of *A Dog's Heart*, the writer presents a challenge to this notion of the dog as trust-worthy, and a further troubling of the veracity and value of speech.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., Felman, p37

What is unique to the particular animal in *A Dog's Heart* is that he remains unchanged by the trauma of his experiences at the hands of the doctor. The last trace of his human self is his voice. In a moving scene where Sharik is recovering from his last procedure, stitched and bandaged together, he rises up on his hind legs for one last time and 'barks suddenly' at the Household Inspectors saying 'Don't use rude words' when they aggressively come looking for the unregistered resident of the surgeon's apartment.<sup>223</sup> These are the last human words he says aloud – an instruction on how to speak, on how to behave vocally. As a dog giving instruction, his final act of defiance is closer to his social awareness of how to survive as a stray underdog than anything he pronounced in his desperate struggle to be a good human comrade. This is the remarkable aspect of this character. The social drama, death-threats, love interests and species-altering surgical procedures do not change the speaking subject of these traumas. There is transformation but it is a futile one. There is only *this* individual dog with his own principals from beginning to end. Sharik /Sharikov is the ultimate 'barbarian within' – a creature that is both sensible and disruptive but one who has little interest in human affairs. He wishes to either be left alone or die. His relationship with Professor Preobrazhensky is entirely opportunistic – if it ended tomorrow, Sharik would most likely shrug it off as a waste of time.

The composer's lack of sentimentality in the musical double-voice of the creature and his determined allegiance to the original text ensures that even the most fervent of dog welfare activists might struggle to find political support for this animal. When Sharikov the man-dog-tenor starts to assert his needs and his will, the mood is high for some animal-as-victim payback. It doesn't arrive. As soon as Comrade Sharikov

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., Bulgakov, p112

starts assaulting the doctor's maid and terrorizing the cats of Moscow by rounding them up and making fur coats out of them, any remaining sympathy- or even empathy- is lost (with hilarious effect). Even though Sharikov must pay for his barbarian chaos and rampant sexualizing of the boring civic job he was assigned to do, by being surgically reversed to 'animal', another promise of operatic tragedy is broken. Nobody dies. When Sharik awakens from the anesthetic he is singularly indifferent to his renewed canine status. He as much as says, 'if there's a sausage in it, I might as well stay here in the professor's library - for now...' Perhaps what remains constant for the dog throughout both the drama and the novel is the sausage that Sharik desires so much (he even learns to read so that he can recognize sausage shops), and it's the thing that gets everything in motion. The dog is starving, the professor has the sausage. As Donna Haraway has pointed out, this is what humans have been exploiting ever since we discovered that some animals are good to eat and other animals are good to domesticate (and then eat) and the most companionable of animals are those that are good to eat with. Since dogs discovered that humans had the same palate as they did and would provide a calorific bonanza of food waste and potential reward systems that could benefit a pack of hungry dogs, the notion of the companion species, the *cum-panis* or bread-sharer, is born. Breeding other animals to be eaten signals the human. Canine histories uniquely benefit within this cycle, and are recorded as such. For Haraway the alliance does not simply end there. Humans benefit enormously from the companionship of a pack of wolf-dogs in their own struggle for survival. It is because of such apparent ease of companionship that dogs have been straying into other people's missions and not always to their benefit (Haraway, 2008).

The figure of the stray dog in arts and performance practices comes with layers of romance, heroism, domination and domestication that have been both directly influenced by experiences with actual canines and have in turn shaped the lives of some particular dogs. For example, in live art performances involving both feral, stray and domestic dogs, the canine figure is almost always loaded with a romantic agony by artists, such as in Joseph Beuys and a coyote, Oleg Kulik's violent dog impressions, and most controversially Guillermo Vargas's installation with a dying street dog in Nicaragua in 2007. The fetishizing of the angry or silent canine martyr extends beyond the gallery and the theatre and into social scientific spheres where similar iconographies occur. A famous example is Laika, another Russian stray terrier who became the first living creature to orbit the earth (though not to survive the mission). She was soon followed on subsequent Sputniks by two more strays, Pchylka and Mushka. The mission programmers reckoned that if a young dog could survive two or three freezing Moscow winters on the streets it was more than prepared for outer space. Laika quickly became an idol of the new soviet nationalism that the space programme sought to generate not least because of her many radio appearances, barking her enthusiasm to play her part in the great Soviet project.<sup>224</sup> In her imposed fidelity to the human effort, Laika was seen as a kind of sacrifice in the name of science. Indeed, the word 'sacrifice' is used by experimental biologists in laboratories today as the technical term to describe animals that are fatal specimens, and carries with it some metaphorical references to ritual transformation and the 'making sacred' of physical repeated actions.<sup>225</sup> Therefore Laika is precisely the type of found stray

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<sup>224</sup> Amy Nelson (2010) 'The Legacy of Laika' in *Beastly Natures*, ed. Dorothea Brantz. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press

<sup>225</sup> Michael E. Lynch (1988) 'Sacrifice and the Transformation of the Animal Body into a Scientific Object: Laboratory Culture and Ritual Practice in the Neurosciences' in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 18, No. 2 : Sage Publications Ltd, pp265-289

dog that became an immortalized and capitalized commodity and part of an emerging animal social history which Haraway describes as the 'instrumental relations between laboratory animals and their people.'<sup>226</sup> In the context of considering dogs as workers in all kinds of situations, not just in art or theatre but in the field as herders, in airports, as rescue workers, in rehabilitation, guiding the blind, anticipating epileptic seizures and as psychotherapeutic assistants for trauma victims, Haraway considers the laboratory dog as perhaps the most hard working social animal of all.

In Haraway's example of laboratory animal labour, the scientific race to be the first to clone a dog culminates in 2005 at the centre for embryonic stem cell research at Seoul National University (SNU), where over a thousand dog embryos were implanted into one hundred and twenty-three bitches. The resulting three pregnancies produced one living pup, 'SNUppy', an Afghan Hound clone, who has since sired several litters of pups out of cloned dams and all of whom are being trained to work for the Korean state as sheep herders and in various positions of national security. In Haraway's estimation, Snuppy's dubious past and uncertain future reveal 'the thick cross-species travel between agribusiness research and human biomedicine often obscured in the U.S. "ethical" debates over human stem cell technologies and imagined therapies or reproductive marvels.'<sup>227</sup> Snuppy, in my view, joins a long list of stray and domesticated dogs that have made both dubious and remarkable contributions to bio-scientific events like cloning and that in turn have become entangled in human socio-cultural expression such as literature and art. It is under the canopy of these kinds of historical narratives and cross-species

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<sup>226</sup> Donna J. Haraway (2008) *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press p.326

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., Haraway, p72



circumstances that I find the operatic Russian dog-man and his contemporary on-stage surgical moment as relevant to this straying in and out of laboratory-literary dog discourse.

### **Broken Promises.**

The lesson in *A Dog's Heart* is not that the dog Sharik suffered but that his suffering is of no consequence to him. He breaks with the history of the onstage canine promise of stereotypical, silent obedience and the potential for martyrdom by singing about it accompanied by an orchestra on the operatic stage.<sup>228</sup> Raskatov's opera is ultimately declaring with characteristic irreverence, as the medium has regularly done from the outset, that there is no hierarchy in speech, that the phenomenon of the voice emanating from the body can override or even dissolve the meaning of the words that are being sung and that this crying out is both angelic and animal at the same time. It's the acoustic exclamation that matters, the vocalized carnal interior becoming exterior, air-borne, and being heard even if oneself is the only one listening. Singing is an acoustic statement of being and the human and animal phenomenological moment is held in the aestheticized sounding-out of the self. This is what Walter Benjamin calls the 'creaturely' voice which emerges 'from the mysterious interior of the organic' and which he maintains is the foundation structure of the genre, the opera.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> In Michelle Duncan's essay, *The operatic scandal of the singing body: Voice, presence, performativity* (2004) she addresses Shoshana Felman's treatment of J.L. Austin's exploration of performative utterance but in the shade of the operatic and in the incomplete shadow of Felman's coverage of *Don Giovanni*. The question for both Felman and Duncan is how does the *Don Juan* contradiction of spoken bodily promise illustrate Austin's theories of language as an accumulative collection of speech acts, grounded in doomed-to-failure promises, but essentially performing a kind of aspirational but realistically unachievable hopeful-ness. See Michelle Duncan (2004) *The operatic scandal of the singing body: Voice, presence, performativity*. Cambridge Opera Journal, 16, 3, 283-304. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>229</sup> In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin writes; "The 'passion for the organic' which has long had a place in the discussion of the visual art of the baroque, is not so easy to describe in literary terms. And it must always be borne in mind that such words refer not so much to the external form as to the

In *A Dog's Heart*, the animal is most radical in how he expresses his casual regard for what is happening to him. He is more aligned with Shakespeare's nonchalant Crab than any of the celebrated dog heroes of the stage or the sentimental Victorian and contemporary biographies of the faithful hound. The opera is more in tune with Nicholas Ridout's notion that 'theatre's greatest ethical potential may be found precisely at the moment when theatre abandons ethics.'<sup>230</sup> The ethics in relation to animal vivisection as an allegory for human political struggle in *A Dog's Heart* are certainly murky. No-one seems to be on anyone's side. But it is the break with the theatrical history of the silent onstage canine and its variously biographically embodied promises of fidelity to the human project that mark this performance as unique in the context of interpreted animal acoustics.

Bulgakov's story similarly separates itself from conventional allegorical animal tales by making the animal body and experience too present, too physical and too vocal to just be a symbolic trope re-used time and again. The narrative technique in this novel and the opera is so complex however that to simply read the story as only an allegory is to ignore something crucial. In Fudge's critique of the novel, she finds something unsettling in Bulgakov's text that ultimately 'reveals the human to be an impotent, priapic, monstrous construction engaged in using animals as objects while acknowledging the closeness of humans and nonhumans' especially dogs.<sup>231</sup> In my reading of Raskatov's opera, I perceive that these imbalances of voices, silences, allegory, and human monsters form the precarious core around which the opera is

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mysterious interiors of the organic. The voice emerges out of these interiors, and properly speaking, its dominion extends in fact to what might be called an organic impulse in poetry...' ( Trans John Osbourne. Verso: New York, p211)

<sup>230</sup> Nicholas Ridout (2009) *Theatre & Ethics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p.70

<sup>231</sup> Erica Fudge (2009) 'At the Heart of Home: An Animal Reading of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*' in *Humanimalia* – Journal of human/animal interface studies, Volume 1, Number 1, Sept 2009. p8

built. The horror of vivisection is elaborately aestheticized on stage with rousing Russian choruses, stunning video projections, high tensile virtuoso singing and dark humour while at its troubled centre there remains what Fudge calls 'the most dislocated thing of all: the human. And sitting by its side, playing with it is as ever, the animal.'<sup>232</sup> At the end of the opera, it is the bandaged dog that has found himself sitting in front of the fire beside his master-surgeon-father and counting his blessings, so grateful to be a dog again now that he knows what it is like to become a human.

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., Fudge, p9

## Chapter Five:

### Becoming Lingual: Primate trouble in the Academy of speech.

*The act of Becoming is a capturing, a possession*  
Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*

*Death and life are the power of the tongue.*  
Proverbs. 18. 21.

When David B. Dillard-Wright thinks across species boundaries he concludes that to become fully human is to find one's voice in the broad general world of animal communication:

Becoming human, then, requires acknowledging this already-existing continuity with the non-human who prevents the error of imagining a self-sustaining, self-enclosed human world. The production of human cultural meaning cannot happen without the dense, interconnecting layers of signs that constitute it; nor can an individual consciousness exist without the general sociality that gives rise to it...Thinking of meaning-production as an interstitial phenomenon more honestly embeds 'human' cultural production within larger processes of interrelation, marking within language, within writing, an opening to other modes of signification.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Dillard-Wright, D.B., (2009). Thinking Across Species Boundaries: General Sociality and Embodied

The concept of 'humanity' therefore has only ever existed as an 'articulation' inside the general milieu of 'world' where nothing is neutral and everything is already meaningful and 'teeming with other minds, other lives.'<sup>234</sup> Selfhood, be it human or animal, is only constituted within sight of the currents of meaning that swirl through the milieu. This phenomenological understanding of embodied meaning arises from the shifts that have taken place in scientific knowledge of animal communication behavior and implies that we can no longer say animals are only reactive, mute and have no bearing on human life and language. Instead we now know that human communication emerges out of a historically shared acoustic world, however distanced we have become from that original place of exchange. For Dillard-Wright, human meaning and language are infused with content 'from the swarming, crawling, leafy world' and just as human beings are impossibilities without air and earth through respiration and digestion, 'human culture as a whole cannot function without the nonhuman actors who co-constitute it.'<sup>235</sup> Alongside biological co-evolution, the once autonomous human cultural distinctions and the old dichotomies of nature and culture, body and mind, behavior and language can now be examined in a much wider territory. Co-constitutionality in the border regions of linguistic and biological signification produces, not a defacement of the human order but an enrichment of it. Inside this newly opened territory, the phenomenon of language has been rethought in terms of *gesture* and not just a product of the mind. For example, Merleau-Ponty reconnects speech and flesh in a chain of becoming in this way:

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Meaning. *Society & Animals*, 17(1), p69

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., Dillard-Wright, p69

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. p53

The spoken word is a genuine gesture, and it contains meaning in the same way as gesture contains it. This is what makes communication possible...The spoken word is a gesture, and its meaning, a world.<sup>236</sup>

Failing to recognize the part nonverbal gesture plays in speech and language by schematically creating divisions of meaning in what can be said and what can be signaled only creates further problems and pulls language away from the body. Just as gestures can be ambiguous, so can speech and it can remain open to interpretation. Therefore, Dillard-Wright suggests, 'all communication is gestural' and 'studies of human communication should begin with extra-human communication.'<sup>237</sup> In this chapter I examine the living human and animal body in performance for these gestures that are ambiguous, fluid, primal, muscular and communicative. In the many, shared biological similarities of species, interior and exterior, the acoustic means of communication, the larynx, the lungs and the tongue become organs of special meaning for human consciousness and culture where, as Roland Barthes wrote, 'the larynx is the mediating muscle.'<sup>238</sup> The voice can appear to carry truths, but can as easily deceive. Speech, voice, gesture and meaning can be entangled conceptually and this entanglement is delivered, or for Barthes, 'expelled from a body that remains motionless' while the muscle itself remains materially unchanged, even pure.<sup>239</sup>

The becomings-human that Dillard-Wright suggests within the continuum of larger processes of multispecies becoming, including the shared space of acoustic communication, further frustrates the Cartesian project of separating humans from animals on grounds of speech ability. Humanity has long been defined as having

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<sup>236</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002) *Phenomenologies of Perception*. New York: Routledge. p211

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., Dillard-Wright (2009), p55

<sup>238</sup> Barthes, R (1977). *Image, music, text*. London: Fontana. p175

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., Barthes, p176

exceptional status among species through the distinguishing achievements of language and communication, abstraction and creativity – those capacities that are absent in say, an insect or a plant. However, certain animals such as chimpanzees and other great apes have consistently put these separations in jeopardy since their importation to the western world in the early modern period. Even though their unique visual closeness to humans was seen as threatening, it was their communication behavior that kept them apart. Because of the apes' inability to speak, the human 'miracle' of language was thought to be safe. In the fierce struggle for enlightenment, speech, song (and prayer) was the voice of the soul. But after Darwin, maintaining the status of human exceptionalism became more difficult. This position of exception was, I will argue, contested by writers and artists who, in contrast to scientific and religious clarifications of difference, were drawn closer to the enigma of the ape and the reflection of this bestial enigma in the human. The performances that shape the arguments in this chapter, which focus on hierarchies of vocalization in human-simian cultural co-evolution, emerged in the post-Darwinian period of the early twentieth century. The legacies of the primate dramas of this era continue to influence interpretations of human-simian cultural relations in contemporary performance and in popular culture. I will begin to untangle some of these legacies by examining the triadic tropes of humans, apes and cages (of the tongue) in the work of Eugene O'Neill and Franz Kafka.

### **Opening and closing cages of identity.**

In the final scene of O'Neill's drama *The Hairy Ape* (1921), the lights fall on the primate houses at the Bronx zoo where "Yank", the colossal labourer at the play's centre enters the arena of cages and starts a chorus of angry chattering among the

chimpanzee and gorilla residents. Since coming ashore to the streets of New York from the coal-stoking bowels of an ocean liner, Yank has failed to fit in to this urban milieu and at the end of almost every scene he is set upon by a mob or policemen, or finds himself in a prison cell or thrown out of a trade union club. He cannot join in anywhere and failing to fit in with these architectures of civilization, he is told to 'go to hell' and wanders up to the zoo to meet his fate.<sup>240</sup> He is drawn to the cage of a gorilla and begins a dialogue with the animal, identifying with him and then aggravating him as the gorilla growls back and rattles the cage in frustration, driving the other apes into a vocal frenzy. When Yank, in an act of solidarity with the animal, opens the cage offers the gorilla his hand in friendship, the 'secret grip of our order', the gorilla pulls him into a crushing embrace, snaps the man's body and throws it into the empty cage, slamming the door shut. Yank, still alive, realizes the irony of the reversal and pulls his broken body upright on the bars calling out 'in the strident tones of a circus barker' – 'Ladies and gents, step forward and take a slant at de one and only...one and original...Hairy Ape from de wilds of...' then he slips to the floor and dies. Yank's physical appearance in O'Neill's production notes is specified as 'Neanderthal' where he should be 'hairy chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows' above 'small, fierce, resentful eyes.' Alongside his fellow shipmen, black from coal dust and stripped to the waist, 'he seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest.'<sup>241</sup> By the time he has gone through his reverse-Darwinian devolution into a marginalized creature, weakened by the travails of becoming a social man, seeking refuge in the zoo, he meets his animal mirror in the form of the gorilla. The strength that drove him

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<sup>240</sup> O'Neill, E., (1960) *Ah, Wilderness! and Other Plays*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin. P188-189

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., O'Neill, p137



through the drama is gone when he extends his hand to shake the hairy hand of the very animal that gave him his pejorative moniker.

The character of Yank is further isolated within the drama in the specifics of his heavily accented speech – a distinct New York drawl that O'Neill writes phonetically to pinpoint the class and even neighbourhood of this outsider. In Yank's long speech to the gorilla, who pounds his chest in response to Yank's questions, he says; 'Sure, I get yuh. Yuh challenge de whole woild, huh? Yuh got what I was sayin' even if yuh muffed de woids... Ain't we both members of de same club –de Hairy Apes?'.<sup>242</sup> In Erika Rundle's expansive and leading study of *The Hairy Ape* she begins with a survey of early 20<sup>th</sup> century theatrical conversations between men and apes on stage most notably with a 1921 Broadway adaptation of Edgar Rice-Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). O'Neill's play was itself an adaptation of his own 1917 short story "The Hairy Ape" and emerged in the company of numerous stories of primate and animal kinship from Rudyard Kipling and Jack London. In recounting these stories or fables, as the animal presence has a tendency to turn any story into a fable, the beginning of the twentieth century was a curiously productive period for the emergence of what Rundle has termed 'primate drama' which she defines as 'a twentieth century American Hybrid of classical and modernist structures that treat the subject of evolution, both explicitly and implicitly, through the disciplines of performance.'<sup>243</sup> While monkeys and their metaphors had been populating Western stories and playhouses for around four centuries, the gorilla had been a rumour until its arrival in London as a stuffed exhibit in 1861. Coinciding with the consequences of Darwin's

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., O'Neill, p186.

<sup>243</sup> Rundle, E. (2008). The Hairy Ape's Humanist Hell: Theatricality and Evolution in O'Neill's "Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life". *The Eugene O'Neill Review*, 30, p7

theory of the origin of species a mere two years earlier, the spectacle of the gorilla's remarkable body was fully exploited to a public still reeling from the discovery of their closest relatives, the primate family. In a post Darwinian world, as Marian Scholtmeijer points out, ape stories are newly loaded with hazardous comparisons and questions of identity where 'all stories are stories about apes told by other apes – or at least primates.'<sup>244</sup>

In Rundle's major study of O'Neill's expressionistic play she shows how the combination of allegories of race, slavery, class and struggle is of its time and is further complicated because of O'Neill's awareness of post-Darwinian confusion of what it meant to be human. This new speaking, swearing, philosophical human-animal of O'Neill's play differs crucially from the standard man-in-a-monkey-suit of vaudeville who was already active on stage as a comic folly. For Rundle, this speaking apish man is a figure of resistance in a *devolution* of human privilege, breaking the paranoid hyper-anthropocentrism produced by Darwin's legacy. Inside these broad themes I am drawn to how Yank is expressing himself and how his articulation anticipates his crumbling into what Rundle call's his 'humanist hell.'<sup>245</sup> Yank's tragic state is highlighted in his exclamations that his life is for industry and for steel: 'I'm de ting in coal dat makes it boin; I'm steam and oil for de engines...I'm smoke and express trains and steamers and factory whistles; And I'm what makes iron into steel! Steel, dat stands for de whole ting!...I'm de muscles in steel, de punch behind

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<sup>244</sup> Scholtmeijer, M. (1997) 'What is "human"? Metaphysics and Zoontology in Flaubert and Kafka. In: Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior ed, *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*. London: Routledge, p139

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., Rundle, p7

it.<sup>246</sup> When his fellow shipmen tell him he is just a slave, a man-machine and one with no voice and no power, the seed of doubt is planted in Yank and he can no longer believe in his man-of-steel mantra. It is knowledge itself (t'inkin' and dreamin') that drives Yank into confusion, rage and then despair. He begins to dissolve, physically and linguistically where his train of thought is becoming scrappy and random, as he is clearly breaking down into a nervous and delusional state. In reaching out to shake the hand of the gorilla he enters into a contract of otherness, divesting himself of the human social milieu, which has rejected him, and embracing the liminal zoo-world of the captive ape. However, the gorilla pulls him in too quickly and destroys him in a physical welcome embrace. The stage gorilla lopes off into the dark night, a dangerous voiceless power with a long career ahead as a metaphorical animal, from which it will never escape. To borrow from Deleuze and Guattari literally, when the human becomes an animal, the animal becomes something else.<sup>247</sup> Yank closes down, death stealing his voice and reducing him to the status of a dead human primate, incarcerated and alone. Yank's body has been emptied of its identity and silenced in the crush of the animal.

If the figure of Yank is coded with categories of species, race, class and gender in search of a distinct identity, he also signifies, for Rundle, how 'American drama had now begun to reflect an understanding of human identity as a series of

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., O'Neill, p146

<sup>247</sup> Deleuze, G and Guattari, F, (2004) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Continuum. p262. When Deleuze says that when the human becomes animal, the animal becomes something else, it only becomes this something else *for the human*. John Mullarkey points out that in contrast to the vast options of human becomings, Deleuze never asks what this something else might *be* for the animal. Mullarkey concludes that for Deleuze 'animal becoming does not interest him in as much as it might participate in anything affirmative *for it*.' In Mullarkey, J., (2013) 'Animal Spirits: philosophism and the background revolts of cinema'. *Angelaki; Journal of the theoretical humanities*, **18**(1), p25.

transformations played out across the vast scale of evolutionary time rather than the static discrete forms authorized by divine creation.<sup>248</sup> O'Neill was now producing a new kind of theatre in the ruins of the 'quickly-receding myth of the Enlightenment subject' and into a mental and emotional confusion of science and of 'the spiritual chaos it produced' in early twentieth century American culture.<sup>249</sup> After O'Neill, the figure of the ape is no longer only a para-human, a stand-in vaudeville joke and a pejorative jibe, but a newly liminal creature that can carry prejudices of bestiality, Irishness, Blackness and the laboring man through the character of Yank and his fellow workers. While becoming a symbol for these outcasts, the ape is cast as 'a paragon of liminality' in all senses.<sup>250</sup> For Annalisa Brugnoli 'the ape comes to embody the psychopomp, a mythical figure of passage who appears in different cultures with the function of mediator between irreconcilable worlds.'<sup>251</sup> As we have seen from Eliade and others, the psychopomp is more commonly known as a shaman, a trickster or medicine man and a go-between, generating ecstatic transformation and escape. In both stories from O'Neill and Kafka the psychopompic nature of the ape-man as an in-between figure becomes 'the primary engine of theatrical action' where he can freely cross over the many boundaries and borders put in front of him – in the ship belly and stokehole, on Fifth Avenue, in the theatre, in the Academy, in the cages of the prison and the zoo – providing an intermediate presence and an 'element of transition in otherwise irreconcilable dimensions' and zones of conflict.<sup>252</sup> Primate drama is also, I believe, the place to begin to locate the lingual turn I identify in the fables that dominate this post-Darwinian period of Rice-Borroughs, London, O'Neill

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., Rundle, p4

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Brugnoli, A., (2012) 'Eulogy of the Ape: Paradigms of Alterity and Identity in Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*' in *Eugene O'Neill Review*, **33**(1), p52

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., Brugnoli p52.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., Brugnoli, p53

and Kafka. It is a post-war world regenerating itself from the horrors of the dehumanizing trenches and struggling with the birth of modernity. In these dramaturgical contexts it is the ape that speaks directly to us and communicates its experience to us, as interpreted by these writers. By breaking the language taboo in literature and performance the creature we are beginning to call 'cousin' has much to say about human life and what it means to become-human, or in Flaubert's description of the man-ape in his short story, 'a marvelous monster of civilization outfitted with all its symbols, great intelligence and shriveled soul.'<sup>253</sup>

Franz Kafka wrote his short story *A Report for an Academy* in 1919 but it would have to wait ninety years for its adaptation for the stage in the form of Colin Teevan's play *Kafka's Monkey* (2009). The misnomer of 'monkey' in Teevan's title is a further slur to the tragic Great Ape in this fable called 'Red Peter', a name he acquired in captivity because of a scars and bullet wounds on his cheek and hip. Far from his origins as a captured ape on Africa's Gold Coast, he stands before the 'academy' to deliver an account of his evolution from ape to man in the highly stylized formal language of an erudite 'gentleman of society'. Red Peter's story, similar to Yank's, begins aboard a ship, heading for both the civilized world and for trouble. Yank's identity is strongest out at sea where the constraints of social life are at a safe distance. In Red Peter's case his captivity ends only when he learns to speak and enter human social life. The door of his cage is opened and he begins his new identity as a 'man' of the urban world.

Red Peter is offered two choices when he arrives in Europe: the zoological gardens or vaudeville. He 'did not hesitate. I said to myself: do your utmost to get onto the

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<sup>253</sup> Flaubert, G (1991) *Early Writings*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. p83

variety stage; the Zoological Gardens means only a new cage; once there, you are done for.’<sup>254</sup> He makes it clear that learning to speak and acquiring the disposition of a middle-class professional theatre actor is far from what could be called ‘freedom’ from his cruel and extended captivity. Learning to speak was only ‘a way out’ or an escape from one set of awful conditions to a more tolerable set of circumstances, which includes a nice flat, a rocking chair and an agent. Almost as footnote at the end of Red Peter’s report, he describes his new domestic companion, a half-trained female chimpanzee who he barely tolerates. The majority of his lecture details his experience in the cage aboard ship. The cage had three sides, the fourth side being the wooden wall of the vessel. The space was so tight the bars pressed into his back. He couldn’t lie or sit but only squat, ‘trembling’. Over the long months at sea he slowly realized that as he was never going to return to his community on the Gold Coast, he was no longer free to be himself, which is the only freedom. Now he must turn around somehow, learn to speak and get the men to open the cage, so he can escape its confines while knowing full well that he is only entering another set of more tolerable restrictions.

Both of these primate dramas (*The Hairy Ape* and *Kafka’s Monkey*) begin on aboard a ship, and both are heading for new lands of civilization, which will also be their characters’ undoing. For Yank the cage door slams shut once he has lost his strength and his voice in his violent death at the hands of the powerful gorilla. In Kafka’s tale, it is only when the ape finds his voice that his animal freedom ends and his escape into human life begins. He clarifies that ‘Freedom was not what I wanted, only a way

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<sup>254</sup> Kafka, F.,(2005) A Report to the Academy, in *The Complete Short Stories*. ed Nahum N. Glatzer. London: Vintage. p258

out.’<sup>255</sup> The images of opening and closing cages that begin this chapter hinge on the theme of capture and release; of speech, of freedom, of humanity, of animality. Speech becomes a way out. By losing it in death and by finding it in captivity, it unlocks a route to another life. In the first half of this thesis I have concentrated on themes of call and response to creatural voices external to the body. The voices in this chapter turn inward, away from listening to the echoes of nature and acousmatic phenomena and towards voices and desires corporeally and imaginatively demanding to be heard from inside the body, where the carnal machinations of being and becoming human are articulated by the fetishized organ of *logos*, the ‘mediating muscle’ of the tongue.

### **The miracle of the lingual.**

Both O’Neill’s and Kafka’s fables open at sea and herald a series of arrivals that echo the arrival in Europe of the first Great Apes from Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Chimpanzees from Angola and Orang-utans from South-east Asia were a shocking spectacle to an early modern world that had already created an elaborate cache of tropes for the mimicking monkey since the classical era.

Knowledge of smaller and more common monkeys appear as far back as the Pharaohs in both domestic and divine contexts as a trickster, a hoaxter, a fool and a menace but always animal and not to be confused with humankind. Never larger than a baboon, the monkey was a mischievous and playful sidekick in the human drama, earning its place as an exceptional mimic.

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., Kafka, F. (2005).p253

Because of their great size and because of their striking likeness to humans, the arrival of the great Apes threw everything into ambiguity. As the scale of the animal body increased so did its capacity to be further filled with a raft of new identities that the figure of the ape still bears on its skin. Character traits and moral flaws in particular that were previously the sole preserve of humanity could now be projected on to these fascinating animals who seemed to absorb every physical gesture from their human hosts and corrupt it. They quickly became living icons of sexual deviance, degeneracy and hypocrisy, and were considered ugly and an affront to the divine creation of the human. In becoming a grotesque caricature with remarkable mimic abilities, the apes of this period are so heavily troped that they could never return to their undiscovered status and the freedom therein. Even when viewed more benignly in paintings and dioramas that began in this period where ape families are depicted living peacefully together, their violence is stolen from them and their complex social worlds are pacified into a zootopian idyll. Alongside this symbolizing process from primate to the most anthropomorphized of creatures, science in its exactitude would try to keep the alignment of the ape with the human in check. Against the backdrop of the Enlightenment scientists examined the ape from the earliest days of its appearance in Europe and published the subtle but crucial anatomical differences of species that these baffling creatures presented to them. The anatomical studies by the famous Dutch surgeon Nicolaes Tulp (1593-1674) are well documented as being the first to name and place the Orang-utan in the taxonomic classification of *Homo sylvestris* in 1641. His contemporary in London, Edward Tyson (1651-1708) had dissected humans but never a chimpanzee and his findings from his first primate specimen were to secure the status of the ape as “not man, but not *not*-man”, in spite of the many uncanny resemblances (Willerslev, 2007; Schechner, 1985).



In Tyson's detailed and careful report to the academy of the period (1699) he could categorically confirm that the vocal chords of the chimpanzee were "mere pipes and vessels" ...and never intended by the Creator to enhance rational speech.<sup>256</sup> In this crucial distinction between what is seen (the exterior body) and what is unseen (its internal constitution), the metaphysics of human-ape relations is established in a manner that would not change and indeed be regularly upgraded as far as the mid-twentieth century. Tyson could not deny the creature its many similarities to human biology including the brain size, the upright gait and the general structure and size of the larynx. However he was adamant and correct in reporting that these striking discoveries bore visual equivalences only and he could claim this as a certainty because of the absence of speech. As a follower of Cartesian thinking and definitions, Tyson knew that speech was the signal of the presence of a soul. Even by proving the physiological impossibility of speech in apes, their new-found position as the "link" between the animal world and humankind (a role held by pygmy peoples until this alteration), was still dangerous but manageable with diligence. As the influx of apes to Europe in the new century grew steadily and spectacularly with the arrival of the orangutan in the 1770s, the philosophers and thinkers of the Enlightenment were provided with plenty of evidence to redefine their classifications of "original" or "natural", brutish, civilized, higher and lower. In his *Systema naturae* (1735), Carolus Linnaeus bravely ranked *Homo sapiens* in the same class as *Homo sylvestris* and several other monkeys and apes. As members of the zoological order of Primates together, this new biological affiliation caused uproar. The question of human dignity

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<sup>256</sup> Corbey, R., (2005) *The metaphysics of apes: negotiating the animal-human boundary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p41

arose and Linnaeus was quick to assure his critics that this was the concern for the theologian not the natural historian who only observed what was visible and stayed clear of invisible ideals such as reason and spirituality.

Making humans part of natural history was a dangerous challenge, not only to the divine actions of a Christian God who had already named all the animals but also undercut the trouble he had taken to make man in his own image. As the debates raged around these classifications, apes were already finding their way onto the stage and held positions in the finest menageries of French noblemen including the royal gardens at Versailles. Their capacity for mimicry, wearing clothes, drinking tea and walking upright began to draw attention and expand the possibilities of figures the ape could become – satyr, rapist, savant, satirist, artist – and once again these visual appearances were threatening to unsettle the order of privilege that the Judeo-Christian powers of influence treasured so deeply. In the opinions of the naturalists and biologists of the period who supported Linnaeus' view, there was no question that humans were different from apes and while these extraordinary, ambiguous creatures may be the intermediaries between human and animal natures they remain tragically and 'in truth...a pure animal wearing a human mask.'<sup>257</sup> Nonetheless, further proof of the impossibility of one of these animals crossing over the divide of species could not help but clear up the mounting confusion about God's real intentions. A second Dutch anatomist and university professor, Petrus Camper had made a series of dissections that confirmed differences in human and Orang-utan materiality and the most important of these differences were the anatomies that

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<sup>257</sup> de Buffon and Daubenton 1766, cited in Corbey (2005) p49

enabled speech in humans and disabled it in the apes and in turn diffused the threat of violating the uniqueness of the human, who alone could pray to the Creator.

In the Jardin du Roi in Paris, where an Orang-utan lived long enough to be stuffed after a life of spectacle, the Bishop of Polignac is reputed to have demanded of the ape: ‘“Speak and I shall baptize thee”’ in front of a gathering who were reassured that the ape’s silence guaranteed it ‘would never be admitted to the community of rational, God-like persons by the ritual of baptism and naming.’<sup>258</sup> Speech at this moment becomes more sacred than it ever had been before the arrival of the Great apes to Europe. Speaking becomes urgently re-ritualized in the form of prayer and good ‘government of the tongue’ maintains a clean, disciplined organ and a devoted larynx:

And to this purpose the infinite wisdom of God ordained Speech; which as it is a sound resulting from the modulation of the Air, has most affinity to the spirit, but as it is uttered by the tongue, has immediate cognition with the body, and so is the fittest instrument to manage commerce between the rational yet invisible powers of human souls clothed in flesh.<sup>259</sup>

Managing soul powers with the tongue certainly separated the man from the beast because in every other way both tongues could be mistaken for each other. The anatomists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century were in fact precisely correct in their comparative dissections of the ape and human larynx and disclosing the differences they found there. The degree of human voluntary motor control over the visceral or automatic behaviour of tongue and larynx is exceptional among species as

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., Corbey, p54.

<sup>259</sup> Allestree, Richard, (1674) *The Government of the Tongue*, Section I. Of the Use of Speech <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/allestree/government.html>. Accessed 20th March 2015

it is directly connected to neurons, cerebellar pathways and skeletal muscles that are unique to human biology and neurobiology. For example, innate human 'calls' such as laughing and sobbing fix the position of the tongue in the mouth, which makes speaking when laughing or crying almost impossible. What separates human lingual control from chimpanzee vocalization is not just the structure of 'mere pipes and vessels' but also the connection to the brain and its astonishing properties. Terence Deacon explains it in this way:

The fact that chimps (and indeed the vast majority of mammals) cannot exercise a more direct cortical motor control over either their phonation or their oral movements at this time demonstrates that even at this low level in the neural control of sound production, human brains must be unusual.<sup>260</sup>

What Tulp, Tyson and Camper visualized as physiological difference has more recently become known as the defining evolutionary development in the Darwinian broadly imagined descent of the human, and is located precisely in the very visceral descent of the human tongue and larynx. The reduction in size of *Homo sapiens* mouth and face and the increase in cranial shape and size has resulted in the descent of the larynx lower in the throat and increased the function of the tongue, the range of vowel sounds that can be made and the degree of laryngeal control available to the rapidly developing brain. The descent of the larynx is not only the beginning of speech but also the origin of human singing as the 'art' of laryngeal control and the governing of the tongue.

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<sup>260</sup> Deacon, T.W.(1997) *The symbolic species: the coevolution of language and the brain*. New York ; London: W.W. Norton. p247

### **Lingual iconography and the dramatological tongue.**

In the basilica of St. Antony of Padua (1195-1231) in Northern Italy, the centrepiece of the main altar is not the saint's bodily remains, which lie in a white marble tomb in the side aisle, but instead the holy relic of his uncorrupted tongue. For the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the exhumation of the tongue, in 2013, a great number of pilgrims gathered to venerate the relic. After his body was exhumed in 1263, it was revealed that his tongue was still 'beautiful, fresh and ruby red' and so began his enshrinement as an Orphic deity. Like Orpheus, when St. Anthony spoke his voice could not only unify the multilingual world of humans but he could converse with fish (in particular) and all creatures in a phenomenon of universal communication, not unlike his peer St. Francis of Assisi (d.1226). The cult of the miraculous organ grew to a pitch in the eighteenth century with a revival of interest in the works of Ovid, and the story of Orpheus in the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses*, and composers such as Vivaldi and especially Tartini were commissioned to write concertos to be performed for the Feast of the Tongue. The success of the relatively new music-theatre genre, the *opera*, which began with Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1607) and continued with Gluck's *Orfeo* (1762), produced a generation of singers and composers for the stage who moved freely between church and opera house where the work was seasonal and popular in both institutions. The baroque phenomenon of both the virtuoso opera singer and violinist meant that the musical veneration of the miraculous tongue in Padua was amply provided with a cache of singers and musicians eager to demonstrate their own lingual prowess. For Pierpaolo Polzonetti, these links 'between the Saint's *lingua* (meaning both tongue and language) and the violinist's music without words stems from the utopian goal of equating instrumental music with language in order to

overcome idiomatic boundaries.’<sup>261</sup> With the violin in particular, the veneration of the tongue through sound soared to new heights in the concertos of Vivaldi where the solo violin episodes ‘dramatize the superhuman aspects of the Saint’s tongue by exploring idiomatically instrumental techniques and extended excursions to the extreme high register that are unapproachable to the human voice.’<sup>262</sup>

It is against these extraordinarily unapproachable heights of veneration of the human tongue made divine, that the surgeons and biologists of the late eighteenth century could make their rightful assertions that the new ape cousins, however persuading in their likeness, would never be part of the dialogue of lingual-specific separation so essential to the progress of the Enlightenment. The human tongue had been a wonder for centuries and in the exhumation of St. Anthony’s remains, the ‘beautiful, fresh’ tongue became miraculous, enshrined and venerated. It still needed to be controlled and ‘governed’ as it was both flesh and part of the body but also could have a mind of its own, nourished as it was on food, sex, and other pleasures. Part of its suspect nature lay in its being partially hidden and occasionally protruding from the body in all manner of lewd gestures. The tongue and its moral psychophysiologies becomes both independent of the carnalities of the flesh by the beauty of its divine speech at the same time as it betrays the body by being always attached to its enfleshings. As a weapon, it can be poisonous, sharp and deadly. As an organ of great power and officialdom, it can decide, deceive, and flatter, seduce and speak unjustly. Allestree’s enlightenment manual of how the ‘government of the tongue’ succeeds in overcoming

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<sup>261</sup> Polzonetti, P., (2014) ‘Tartini and the Tongue of Saint Anthony’. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, **67**(2), p430

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., Polzonetti, p468

these unruly traits could not be more timely in a period of extravagance of meaning for this singular organ.<sup>263</sup>

Before the iconography of the tongue might be consigned to being a superstitious or pre-enlightenment phenomenon, I want to show three examples here that carry a sacramental and sacrificial consciousness of the tongue into a contemporary performative extravagance of display and association. In visual artist Alice Maher's (b.1956) *Portrait* series (2003) and in her performance film *Cassandra's necklace* (2012) she strings together necklaces of lamb's tongues to be worn against her own bare skin for the portraits or around the neck of the actress in the film, where the tongues also appear on silver platters presented by a young girl to the camera, in glistening detail.<sup>264</sup> For Maher, the tongue is not only the silenced organ of the Cassandra myth but also the arrested and traded speech organ of suffragetism. In a visceral allegory with the most divine of sacrificial animals, the Lamb of God, the display of the necklace around the throat of the artist is weighed down with fleshed out symbolism. Unlike taxidermied organs, these fresh lamb's tongues (acquired at a butcher's counter) retain their slippery liveness and connect the (digital) capture of the image to the killing and rendering of the lamb. The Korean-American artist Doo-Sung Yoo re-animates cows' tongues in a series of robotic wall sculptures as part of his *Organ-machine hybrid* series (2007) and developed further in the cyborg performance series *Vishtauborg version 3.1 - "Incompatibility"* (2012). The slapping, jeering and very long tongues protrude from the gallery wall in a disturbing visceral animatronic surreality. In the live performances the tongues are operated by an

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., Allestree, (1674)

<sup>264</sup> See the portraits and film extract here: <http://www.alicemaher.com/portraits---2003.html>. Accessed Friday, 27th March, 2015 at 14:41pm

elaborate post-punk robotic costume worn by a quasi-Butoh dancer.<sup>265</sup> For Doo-Sung, this biological detritus (also from the butcher's waste bucket) is repurposed as a prosthetic signal to warn a hyper-consumerist society against the consequences of forsaking the individuality of the mass-produced animal. In one further sensational lingual moment, which had none of the bio-political conscientiousness of Maher or Doo-Sung, a synthetic giraffe's tongue was wielded in front of a wilting soprano on stage at the Coliseum in 2012 in the ENO's production of Handel's opera *Julius Caesar* (1724). As a warning to Pompey's widow Cornelia, who is sworn to silence after the assassination of her husband, her tormentor Ptolemy drags the head of a giraffe (a once-living gift from Caesar) across the stage and with great effort pulls out the huge rubbery muscle and brandishes it in front of her mouth in a dreadful display of power. Cornelia is so revolted by this action she is carried away holding her retching mouth closed. Ptolemy flings the tongue into a bucket and sings a long aria of revenge. The audience, including myself, waited wearily for the bucket to be removed and the splashes of tongue blood to be mopped from our collective experience at the Coliseum. Slowly as my own tongue felt less large and distressed in my own mouth, I understood the metaphors in the violence of the scene but the violations done to the virtual animal body were more difficult to overcome. Was this, like everything else that happened on the operatic stage, an augmentation of the real in a fantasy of multi-sensory experience or a gratuitous exploitation of (virtual) animal bodies in a grand narrative of supremacy and hierarchical exclusion? Before the beheading of the giraffe in this production, Cleopatra disemboweled an eighteen-foot dead crocodile and removes its eggs, which remain positioned about the stage for the whole of Act

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<sup>265</sup> See an image sequence of Vishtauroborg here: [http://doosungyoo.com/artwork/2856456\\_Vishtauroborg\\_version\\_3\\_1\\_Incompatibilit.html](http://doosungyoo.com/artwork/2856456_Vishtauroborg_version_3_1_Incompatibilit.html). Accessed on Friday 27th March 2015. 14:23pm



Two. The gory exposure of the animal body on the operatic stage contextualizes some of my specific interests in the corporeal materiality of the vocalic animal body inside the more general subject of the animal body in performance. Since the disappearance of the live animal from opera performance, the newly spectacular virtual or puppet animal is subjected to innumerable violent actions and distortions in a manner inconceivable to the productions that simply increased the exoticism and extravagance of, say, a production of *Aida* by hiring a pair of camels or, if circumstances permitted, an elephant. The contemporary trend for both exceptionally realistic animal bodies in the productions I mention here or the symbolic puppets (of Complicite for example) allow for a new interpretation of what the animal body can achieve in material-semiotic visceral, but sanitized, fantasies, the kind that creates a leopard corpse pierced with spears and suspended above the action in ENO's *Radamisto* (2010); and the kind that produces a beheaded giraffe whose mangled body lies at the back of the stage while its tongue is brandished above the orchestra pit.

In one final example of contemporary tongue iconography, Anselmo Fox's series of portraits *La lingua della lingua* (1999) pushes the proximities of human and animal lingual identities into a close proximity that threatens a number of boundaries at once, yet the method of photographing these low-key high-impact actions keeps the physical revulsion at a remove. For this project, Fox acquired the tongues of a leopard, a wolf, a python, a kingfisher, a sheep, a flamingo and an ape, and inserted them in his own mouth, and the mouth of a female friend, to make his portraits. He also was able to readily collect his cache of tongues through his butcher, a gourmet food store and the pathology section of Berlin zoo. In some side-long views, the larger

tongues, like the apes', are seen held and supported by the artists' own tongue. The tongue-to-tongue contact is sensual, bestial and sacramental all at once and reflected in the title, which is open to translation as the tongue of the language, the language of the tongue or the language of language or the tongue of the tongue. But literal translations of the images are wasted on the tactile viscosity of imagining the sensation of holding a serpent's forked tongue between your lips or holding your mouth open so as not to swallow the fat tongue of a leopard. In a further sacramentalization of the action, each tongue was purified by being dipped in grappa, before being accepted into the human body, hosted by the resident tongue and beginning a partial hybridization. Alongside these botched lingual becomings, Fox has staged a series of interspecies mouth-to-mouth actions, preserving the intimacies in dental silicon and casting the negative impressions in metal. The images of the tongue in these diverse contemporary examples draw from historical, religious and socio-cultural contexts in their construction. By detaching the tongue from the throat each piece relies on the empathy of the viewer to be physically affected by the violent image of extracting the muscle out of the safety of the mouth and into a visual confrontation as a disembodied object with a sensual history. The physical interior becoming exterior in these works suggests in my view, a mirroring of the metaphysical thought-becoming-word via the tongue, along with the fabulization of speech in human-animal narratives and the verbal expression of the phenomenological sensations of being and becoming a vocalic body.

### **Fabulizing the creatural voice and its materials.**

In Fox's assemblage of portraits he achieves a kind of 'symposium of the tongue' where actions of speaking and eating are interrogated, convivially, in what Chris

Danta might call the 'orification of philosophy.'<sup>266</sup> The mouth is the place of appropriation and assimilation of the animal other – through eating, conversation and storytelling. For Danta, this mouth site is not just the preserve of the human story teller who tells stories about talking animals while eating them, but it is further complicated in the speaking animals of fables (and fables are always about talking animals). For example, in an early scene from the (anonymous) biography of Aesop, the creator of fabulous beasts, he is working as a slave in the house of Xanthus. When asked to cook a meal with the finest ingredients for Xanthus and his students, Aesop goes to the butchers and collects all the discarded tongues of the pigs that have been slaughtered that day. After a series of courses of tongue, Xanthus asks Aesop could he not have found any other meat more fitting for a banquet. Aesop replies that there could be no finer an organ on which all of education and philosophy depends. The students suffer that night from their feasting and the next day Xanthus asks Aesop to make a plain meal for them, nothing rich and with poor, even inferior ingredients. When Aesop serves up a second night of pig's tongue dishes to the disgust of his master and to the revulsion of the students he defends his actions by claiming that, at his master's request he sourced the most abominable organ, the source of all lies, enmity, plots, battles and cruelty. The tongue declares all that is both good and bad about being human. For Danta, 'Aesop thinks with the mouth. He shows the mouth to be a site of thought...by rerouting various concepts through the mouth' and in turn he uses 'both his own (once mute) slave tongue and the slaughtered tongues of animals...to deprive the masters of their power over discourse.'<sup>267</sup> For Xanthus and his students their desire to transcend the materiality of eating (physics) and speaking

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<sup>266</sup> Danta, C. (2014) 'Might sovereignty be devouring?': Derrida and the Fable. *SubStance*, 43(2), p44

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., Danta (2014), p47

(metaphysics) at the same time is arrested by Aesop's 'bestly strategy', where he undermines lofty ambitions with bodily realities by corrupting their meal into what Danta calls 'a grotesque symposium of tongues.'<sup>268</sup>

In *The Animal that therefore I am* (2008) Derrida advises that 'above all' it is necessary to avoid fables because: 'We know the history of fabulization and how it remains an anthropomorphic taming, a moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse *of* man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and in man'.<sup>269</sup> However he also can see the value of fables, (as he does with the fables of La Fontaine in *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2009) where for him the tongue banquet illustrates perfectly his theory that 'the place of devourment is also the place of what carries the voice' and where the fable, 'more than any other genre depends for its meaning on the double function of the mouth-as site for both speaking and eating and troubled intersection of the beast and the sovereign.'<sup>270</sup> All of the discourse 'of man, on man' that troubles Derrida, is a product of 'the anthropological machine' which turns everything into service for the hyper-masculine human project (Agamben, 2004). In human-animal interactions in fables however, Derrida can see that the limits of reason are exceeded by a truth contained in the moral force of the tale and so the fable itself becomes a kind of speech act, an oral, repeated and performed, perfected and refined where speaking animals moralize about the foibles of humans. However, in the post-Darwinian context that created the fables of O'Neill and Kafka in this chapter, the fabulized animal, especially the ape, can no longer be so easily troped as a caricature 'of man, on man' nor is the ape so readily made to fit into a

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p48

<sup>269</sup> Derrida, J., (2008) *The animal that therefore I am*. Ashland, Ohio; London: Fordham University Press. p37

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., Danta, p47

project of 'anthropomorphic taming'<sup>271</sup> where 'whoever refuses to recognize himself in the ape, becomes one.'<sup>272</sup> As the shockwaves from Darwinism continued to reach far into every corner of early twentieth century Western consciousness, it is in the genre of the fable that the ontological uncertainties and complications of primate life become captured. The evolution of both the ape-man fable genre and the scientific are strangely being simultaneously jotted down in 1836; in literature with Flaubert's dark tale of the biological hybrid ape-child, Djalioh, in *Quidquid Voleuris* (1837); and aboard *The Beagle* where Charles Darwin first surmises in his notebook that species may not be fixed. On returning to London, Darwin has his first encounter with an Orang-utan in London Zoo. From this point on, 'all stories are stories about apes told by other apes.'<sup>273</sup>

### **Becoming Lingual, becoming humanesque.**

It is an established fact that apes will not speak or, to be clear, learn to speak as humans do. Aside from some aberrations of primate vocal research in the nineteen fifties and sixties, along with the ebbing of chimpocentrism in favour of a broader primate field research which has a conservation bias, we can be grateful that captive great apes will no longer be subjects for this tedious and fruitless anthropocentric obsession (Beck, 1982). Instead the apes in research centres and in the field today are continuing to challenge and progress our understanding of what 'language' can be, what it might mean for them and how they can teach us how we human primates acquire speech and language (Goodall, 1986, 2002; Hopkins, W.D., Leavens, D.A. and Tagliatela, J.P., 2007; Tomasello, 2010). In light of these studies, my aim here is to

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid., Derrida, (2008).

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., Agamben, (2004), p27

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., Scholtmeijer.

locate the moment when the knowledge and skillfulness of the lingual, of the sacred organ is no longer sufficiently expressive in spite of all its achievements. Instead the artist/performer, across disciplines, turns to what is devolutionary, counter-lingual, guttural, unintelligible, and even banal by reinstating the spittle, the chatter and 'the yell, the stutter, the stammer, the groan, the cough, the laugh, the hemming and hawing, the umming and erring' in an attempt to broaden what Simon Bayly terms 'the passionless category of "speech" which strips out the scream from the voice.'<sup>274</sup> Alongside the enormous volume of sound and words and music available, it is these expressions of the animal on the threshold of becoming, the sound of the 'paragon of liminality' that attracts the artists who are the foundation of this study.<sup>275</sup>

In Kathryn Hunter's interpretation of Kafka's 'report to an academy' she appears on stage in an evening suit, white tie, patent leather shoes and a bowler hat. She carries a suitcase and a walking stick. From her appearance her gender is as unclear as her species and when she begins her monologue, her voice confounds her strange figure even further. A slightly rasping, heavily annunciated accent of a Victorian gentleman announces to 'the *esteemed* members of the academy', which we the spectators automatically become, this small 'man' is happy to give his account of his former life 'as an ape.'<sup>276</sup> From the outset, Red Peter's story, who we know acquired his name from his capture wounds, is a story of violence. His anthropomorphosis is a kind of corporeal sacrifice where he relinquishes his ape-ness in order to satisfy the needs of others, his captors, as well as finding a way to survive. He mourns the loss of his ape nature before turning in his tiny cage and facing the challenge of becoming human, a

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<sup>274</sup> Bayly, S., (2011) *A pathognomy of performance*. Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p153.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., Brugnoli.

<sup>276</sup> Teevan, C (2011) *Kafka's monkey*. London: Oberon Books. P15

familiar scene in the long and violent tradition of simian narratives at the intersection of literature and science (Medeiros, 1993). In Hunter's performance of Red Peter, she brings this violence and frustration through in the vocal complexities of her ape-man character who swerves from grand gentleman to emotional wreck and holds himself together just long enough to deliver his report as he explains politely: 'You see, I am still overcome with such an aversion to human beings, I can barely stop myself from retching...It's nothing to do with the person in question, Least of all your good selves, Ladies and Gentlemen of the academy, It's *all* humanity.'<sup>277</sup> What Red Peter finds unbearable is not the smell of human beings, per se, but how 'the smell of humanity' clings to his own body and 'mingles with the smell of my native land.'<sup>278</sup> Along with learning how to drink alcohol, spit, laugh and perform his transformation from ape to human with a humiliating impression of a vaudeville chimpanzee, it is with the voice that both Hunter and Red Peter cross the threshold of anthropomorphosis and their reluctant becomings.

At the centre of the play and the short story is Red Peter's explosive breakthrough 'into the world of human speech.' After weeks of rehearsal with one of the sailors, he performs the trick of drinking a whole bottle of schnapps and then:

I threw the bottle away, not this time in despair, but as an artistic performer; forgot indeed to rub my belly; but instead of that, because I could not help it, because my senses were reeling, called a brief and unmistakable 'Hallo!' breaking into human speech, and with this outburst broke into the human

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., Teevan, p57

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

community, and felt its echo; 'Listen, he's talking!' like a caress over the whole of my sweat drenched body.<sup>279</sup>

Exhausted from this effort, Hunter brings a deep pathos to the next scene where having found his voice, Red Peter loses it again immediately and it does not to return for months. Departing from the text, Hunter steps toward the audience, and with frustrated emotion she delivers an extended 'soliloquy' of botched becoming, which I transcribe as the following:

Uh Hoo hoo hey. Hey ellouu?

Egay hoo hoo egay? Egeg ooo. Uh hoo Gu. Eh guh Gu eh.

Eh he beh. Oh he beh uh Gu. Inn Nee. Uh Hoo hoon Nee.

Ee zee eezee Low. Eezee Lum Eezee.<sup>280</sup>

Red Peter's anthropomorphosis also begins with taste and oral retraining from his sailor captors who 'hardly spoke but grunted at each other' but who Red Peters says were 'good creatures, in spite of everything.'<sup>281</sup> Smoking cigars and drinking schnapps, and laughing like barking dogs, 'they always had something in their mouths to spit out and did not care where they spat.'<sup>282</sup> Before Red Peter turned around in his cage he used his voice and his mouth differently:

I am supposed to have made uncommonly little noise...Hopelessly sobbing, painfully hunting for fleas, apathetically licking a coconut...sticking out my tongue at anyone who came near me – that was how I filled in time at first in my new life.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., Kafka, *A Report*, p257

<sup>280</sup> My translation is taken from a recording of Kathryn Hunter's performance of *Kafka's Monkey* acquired from Digital Theatre, Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

<https://www.digitaltheatreplus.com/productions/kafkas-monkey>. Accessed 29th March 2015.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., Kafka, *A Report*, p254

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p252



Once Red Peter decides that this new life could have another dimension outside the cage he begins his transformation by imitation and via the mouth:

It was so easy to imitate these people. I learned to spit in the first few days.

We used to spit in each other's faces; the only difference was that I licked my face clean afterwards and they did not.<sup>284</sup>

Re-orientating the body towards this new, though revolting human world comes through the bottle of schnapps of which the smell alone of an empty bottle causes him to reel in 'disgust, utter disgust.' It is only after taking the men's vile liquid down his throat into his body, in a 'becoming by ingestion',<sup>285</sup> that he is rewarded with his first word, '*Hallo!*'<sup>286</sup> For Red Peter, as with the other human animal metamorphoses in Kafka's work, the mouth becomes the primary point of transformation and the crucial first contact of becoming other.

Animal voices in Kafka's fables always go through a process of lingual transformation before becoming fully human or fully animal. In *The Metamorphosis*, where Gregor Samsa progresses into fully becoming-insect, it is the deterioration of his ability to communicate with his family with words that defines the hinge on which the story turns. The physical transformation has already taken place as the story opens. When Gregor wakes up he has *already* morphed into a gigantic insect, and this is his (and our) first astonishment. It is when he tries to speak from behind the closed bedroom door that the scale of his predicament is revealed. In Akira Mizuta Lippit's description, Gregor can still hear his own voice but

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid, p257

<sup>285</sup> Lippit, A. K., (2000) *Electric animal: toward a rhetoric of wildlife*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p151

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., Kafka, *Metamorphosis*, p257

with a persistent horrible twittering squeak behind it like an undertone, that left the words in their clear shape only for the first moment and then rose up reverberating round them to destroy their sense, so that one could not be sure one had heard them rightly.<sup>287</sup>

Once Gregor loses his speech he becomes less interested in everything else to do with the human world and begins to explore the possibilities of his new insect body by walking on the ceiling. In order to complete the zoomorphosis, Gregor must willingly sacrifice his sense of human consciousness and human language. When he abandons his efforts to communicate as a human, as Lippit explains, 'the entire world is thrown into an animated state of disarray' and so he is 'forced to reconstruct every relation between his body and the environment anew', which is the very essence of a Deleuzian becoming.<sup>288</sup> All doors and windows are constantly locked and unlocked and opened and closed and furniture is relocated as Gregor's world undergoes a radical reterritorialization of his insect body. His world becomes an exclusively acoustic domain where he listens to the politics of the household and the ritualized pattern of secrets that accommodate his trauma. Crucially however it is an oral renegotiation of food, of survival, that replaces speech in his communication with his sister who brings him his favourite vegetables and milk. Gregor is repulsed by the produce but finds something rotten to chew in the garbage, which his sister understands to be his need from then on. Even without speech, he finds a way to renegotiate his relationships not by visual signals but with oral signs. When Deleuze and Guattari consider metamorphosis in Kaka's animal stories they succinctly define its core elements to be 'a sort of conjunction of two deterritorializations, that which

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid., Kafka, p92

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., Lippit, *Electric animal*, p148

the human imposes on the animal by forcing it to flee or serve the human, but also that which the animal proposes to the human by indicating ways-out or means of escape that the human would never have thought of by himself (schizo-escape).'<sup>289</sup> While the deterritorializations of Kafka's spaces such as burrows, castle keeps, the Gold Coast and the theatre offer different 'lines of flight' for his human and animal creatures, each renegotiation with territory and with the transformed body begins in the mouth.

Recalling the screaming, laughing, sobbing mouth in Samuel Beckett's *Not I* (1972), Simon Bayly follows a line of thinking about the mouth as the pre-eminent organ of surrealist, sacrificial exposition of the body in a Deleuzian dismantling of the face where:

The face is all mouths, a concentration of openings into a labyrinth of interior cavities, each with its own potential for violent and essentially formless emissions, whether spittle or laughter, phlegm or speech. All of these take on a fluid excretory quality in which the humid wetness of the oral cavity plays a generative part. Vocal emissions of any kind become inseparable from accompanying fluid substance, the very stuff of life and death, opposed to the disembodied, silent odourless, 'dry' and ethereal voice of immortality.<sup>290</sup>

In the primate dramas and other performances in this chapter, renegotiating the territories of human-animal becomings generate a metalinguistic shift where, Lippit says, 'animal noises indicate a place of communication beyond the limits of

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<sup>289</sup> Deleuze and Guarrati, F.,(1986) *Kafka: toward a minor literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.p35

<sup>290</sup> Bayly, S., (2011) *A pathognomy of performance*. Basingstoke ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan. p177-178

language.’<sup>291</sup> When Kathryn Hunter steps forward into the single light focusing on her distressed face and delivers her garbled speech she is not chimp but not not-chimp, in a Beckettian not I but not not-I. Instead she creates a new questioning voice filling the chiasm between the ape-man and the academy of spectators; *Inn Nee. Uh Hoo hoon Nee. Ee zee eezee Low. Eezee Lum Eezee*. Hunter also steps away from the texts of both Kafka’s fable and Teevan’s adaptation in her astonishing schizo-lingual confrontation; it is not a plea for language but for empathy for the crisis of the splitting person in the humanimalian condition of Red Peter. Bayly uses the term ‘humanesque’ to describe a similar sound spectrum that can contain ‘what is sacred and the raucous cacophony of what is profane, but also of the infra-human, the sub-human and the inhuman.’<sup>292</sup> The humanesque departs from the strictures of humanism to become something more elaborate and precarious, stretching the phenomenon of the voice back to its origins and forward into unknown territories of perception. In the multiple vocal resonances of Hunter’s Red Peter, it is in her capturing of the humanesque - human, ape, not ape but not not-ape - that she stretches our understanding of how we articulate ourselves in the academy of speech.

In René Spitz’ influential essay on the genesis of perception, he locates the mouth, sound and hearing before sight, as the birthplace of all future understanding of the world:

The mouth as the primal cavity is the bridge between inner reception and outer perception; it is the cradle of all external perception and its basic model; it is the place of transition for the development of intentional activity and for the

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid., Lippit.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid Bayly p153. Bayly quotes the term ‘humanesque’ from Amanda Macdonald’s essay ‘In Extremis: Hergé’s Graphic Exteriority of Character’ in *Other Voices*, 1(2), 1998. Accessed April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

emergence of volition from passivity. In sleep the activity of the mind retraces its way toward the primal process, and the primal cavity then becomes the cavernous home of the dreams.<sup>293</sup>

Mediating muscles and mammalian physiologies of larynx, tongue, lungs and mouth struggle against the anthropological machine to retain the acoustic qualities of their own species. But when nonhuman primate animal bodies are enculturated, they are put to work long and hard to find escapes routes for human fantasies of being and becoming nonhuman and humanesque. In primate drama, an often Artaudian cruel theatre of fables and dreams where humans and animals are swapping spittle, liquor, songs, words and terrible emotion, it is the tongue in the cavity of the mouth, that articulates the action of dangerous dreaming and botched lingual becomings.

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<sup>293</sup> Spitz, R (1955) 'The primal cavity: a contribution to the genesis of perception and its role for psychoanalytic theory' in *The Psychoanalytic study of the Child*, 10, Yale University Press, p215

## Chapter Six.

### **Becoming Resonant: Sounding the creatural through performance.**

Becoming does not produce, it resonates.

*Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, 2006*

For Amy Youngs' installation titled *Intraterrestrial Soundings* (2004), she put eight custom microphones into a box filled with soil, newspaper, food waste and a colony of live worms. The microphones were connected to an eight channel firewire interface (MOTU 896) and a Mac laptop which filtered the noises of the worms and fed the live sound to a custom upholstered chaise longue which was embedded with eight amplified speakers. The speakers were positioned in the chaise to mirror the location of the microphones in the worm box, which was only visible from the outside in the dimly lit room of the gallery. When lying on the chaise listening to the worms move about making compost, a screen overhead the visitor projected a live infrared video relay of the action inside the worm box, in the vermiculture. Everything in this installation's environment is amplified; sound and image, furniture, participation, interior and exterior, light and darkness. The movements of the worms generate vibrations in the chaise, which you can feel pulsating through you and bringing into perception a strange sensation of their small moving bodies. These reverberations produce a kind of sensory awareness, opening receptors or nerves in the body specifically in the ear, the muscles

and joints. This awareness of both internal and external influences is also how a worm proceeds through its own intra-terrestrial environment.

In the many subsequent biological, bio-technocultural and ecocritical interactive works that Youngs has made using soil, live plants and worms, the worm box remains the only piece that uses live sound. For Youngs the purpose of the sound was a method of listening in on the work that the worms are doing in an amplification of the underground unseen world which she feels is broadly under-examined and under-appreciated. She says; ‘Humans continue to be interested in detecting signals of extra-terrestrial life in outer space, but have overlooked the intra-terrestrial signals of life – the worms and insects that sustain our own terrestrial existence.’<sup>294</sup> It is important for her that her work, which is always interactive, has a palpable as well as visual connection where ‘the human experiences self as a mutually dependent being, intermeshing and intermingling with the non-human.’<sup>295</sup> Compared with the video image, it is the sense of having co-mingled with the vermicultural world physically or sonically, through sound that sustains the experience long after the image of the busy worms fades. Lying on the reverberating chaise, there is an uncanny closeness, a becoming-alongside, in proximity to acoustic intra-action and the influence of bodies moving that would be impossible to experience without the technology. As with the other amplified human-animal entangled sounds I have detailed in this thesis, worm worldings and vermiculture comes to us in this work acoustically and acousmatically, through sound waves and reverberations that stretch our perception of what animal acoustics are doing, entangled in human voices and bodies in performance.

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<sup>294</sup> *Intraterrestrial Soundings* was first shown in ‘Sonic Difference’ at the Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth (BEAP) in 2004, curated by Tura New Music and Sound Culture and in association with the City of Freemantle. Quoted from Amy Youngs statement about the piece on her website; <http://hypernatural.com/about.html>. Accessed Tuesday, 7th April, 2015.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid Youngs.

In the deterritorializing processes of becoming through musical instrumentalisation (of the bird to flute to music to recording, for example) Deleuze and Guattari see evidence of 'a new threshold' of creativity where they identify becomings with insects and microbial, even molecular, life. They attribute this shift to the operas of Richard Wagner where his revolutionary approach - the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, (*total art work*) - heralds the new era of modern music: 'Birds are still just as important but the reign of birds seems to have been replaced by the age of insects, with its much more molecular vibrations, chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping (in electronic new music for example)...The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular.'<sup>296</sup> When considering microcosms of sound and becomings in insect life (which could perhaps include worm life) Deleuze and Guattari discover that:

the molecular has the capacity to make the *elementary* communicate with the *cosmic*: precisely because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and slownesses, which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits...the same thing that leads a musician to discover the birds also leads him to discover the elementary and the cosmic. Both combine to form a block, a universe fiber, a diagonal or complex space. Music dispatches molecular flows.<sup>297</sup>

Creating an exchange between the cosmic and the microcosmic or at least positioning oneself to being open to listening to these exchanges requires an epistemic shift, becoming both subject and object of sonic forces and perhaps being affected by them; this, I suggest, is the challenge of what I call 'becoming resonant'. In describing this

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<sup>296</sup> Deleuze, G and Guattari, F., (2004) *A Thousand Plateaus*, p340

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., Deleuze and Guattari.



state of openness to resonance ‘far beyond its formal limits’ Michelle Duncan considers how:

The position requires us to open both mind and body to the wonder of resonance and to postpone analysis: to postpone translating voice into the predetermined cognitive categories the mind has at its disposal and to simply wait and listen, to experience what the voice does.<sup>298</sup>

Asking the listener to open in this way particularly toward to operatic voices, Duncan suggests that we as listeners, would be well served by taking leave of our ‘absolute sovereignty’ and acknowledging that we can be subject to material forces that have more control over the mind and body, ‘to avail oneself to the sound of voice.’<sup>299</sup>

When composer John Cage availed himself of the opportunity of spending time in an anechoic chamber at Harvard University, it was just this kind of submission he was seeking to experience, as well as hoping to hear total silence. However, the experience in the chamber, which is sealed and structured to eliminate reverberation and to have no resonance whatsoever, was slightly disappointing to Cage. Instead of hearing silence he clearly heard two sounds of an upper and lower register. On emerging from the chamber he was told that the higher sound was his nervous system whirring and the lower sound was the noise of his blood circulating through his body. In a profoundly molecular becoming-with his own bodily interior, Cage’s experiment also illustrates an insight into the third sonic event which is the listening organ itself, the hole in the head that is the ear (Bayly, 159). In the anechoic chamber where there is nothing external to perceive, the ear turns inward listening to the machinations of the body and its

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<sup>298</sup> Duncan, M. (2004) The operatic scandal of the singing body: Voice, presence, performativity. *Cambridge Opera Journal*. 16(3) p300

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., Duncan.

labyrinthine network of resonances. What I learn from Cage's story is that my ear becomes the conduit for an exchange of acoustics where sound waves are travelling into my body, through the network of passages of the inner ear, along the 'bony labyrinth' (or osseous labyrinth)<sup>300</sup>, to the vestibule where tympanic membranes push the waves through canals in to the cochlea. There the auditory nerves, the neurons, pass on the external sound waves to the brain and mix them with the barely perceptible internal sounds of my other cavities, muscles, blood, lungs, nerves and bone joints in a continuous flow of aural intensities and looped exchanges. In these structures of the ear, the anechoic chamber and the chamber of the worms I find acoustic routes - corporeal, instrumental, architectural – that will guide my exploration of resonance deeper inside human-animal acoustic exchanges that shape this chapter. In these assemblages from the molecular to the monumental, all sound must find its way through the bony labyrinth of the ear in reverberations throughout the body and through body parts as both receptors and instruments, and in the process become meaningful by becoming resonant.

### **Becoming through instrumentation (Body as instrument).**

In Don Ihde's speculations on different types of human musical production he identifies two phenomenological types: voice, which is directly bodily expressive (and which I will discuss presently), and instrumentation that embodies relations between humans and sound technology, which I will unpack here. As I have discussed earlier the genesis of music performance is closely aligned with the sophistication of hunting techniques in pre-historic cultures. The material animal body is just as present today in the orchestra in the form of bone, leather, hair and gut and transitionally, keratin in the

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<sup>300</sup> Refers to the bone, not the art theatre group, *osseous labyrinth*.

form of horn. The horn section of the orchestra – cor anglais, French horn, oboe, clarinet and so on – are all developments of the animal horns of rams, deer and antelope and bull. As with the previous examples with objects of ritualized play, these instruments have origins in hunting and religion and in their combination, the ritual animal sacrifice. Like other instrument families, the horn section has its origin in hunting practices but as a by-product of animal rendering and as a communication device between hunters and then herders across large territories (as it is still used today in some traditional farming communities). The horn (and its cousin the conch shell) differs from reed instruments and flutes therefore, as it is never used to imitate an animal. However the call that emerges holds a trace of the animal's voice with its resonating tones. Sometimes sound crosses species, for example in the ritualized ram's horn of "shofar" - which means both the object, an ancient Jewish ritual instrument and the action of sounding the horn at the close of Yom Kippur - which in turn sounds *something* like the roar of a bull. Shofar is the sound of the trumpet blast across the desert of Mount Sinai where Moses received the Tablets of the Law and put an end to the bull-calf worship of the trembling people below. Shofar is a numinous phenomenon through which the listener and player can come into communion with a 'wholly Other' in an experience that is sacred, transcendent or even supernatural, or what Donald Tuzin has called 'the magicality of sound.'<sup>301</sup> In the broad context 'from the shaman's rattle to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir,'<sup>302</sup> for Tuzin and his ethnomusicologist colleagues, it is not the rhythm and reverberations of percussion (drums, bells) that holds the magicality he ascribes to the phenomenon of the numinous sound object. Instead he suggests that sounds created from the body interior through wind/breath

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<sup>301</sup> Tuzin, D., et al., (1984) Miraculous voices: The auditory experience of numinous objects [and comments and replies]. *Current Anthropology*. 25(5) p580

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., Tuzin.

instrumentation and ‘human voices, especially as they are augmented and distorted in a resonant chamber such a basilica’ or a synagogue become the conduits for the uncanny and the preternatural and all other enthralling experiences of ritual.<sup>303</sup> What is curious to me is that shofar, and other ancient instruments such as the bull-roarer that I described earlier, are not entirely musical per se, but produce abstract, sonic events that go to the core of the body physically and psychodynamically. These instruments do not try to imitate or reproduce natural sounds but their sustained, disturbing, arresting strangeness instead manifests the presence of an aural otherness (which can quickly become the voice of a cult spirit). The reverberations that these instruments produce, alongside their aesthetic qualities, find routes into the listening body and are unstoppable.

At an infra-sonic level, below human audibility, Tuzin explains, ‘sonic vibrations assail the entire body; but because the sensation is vibration - as is normal sound - the feelings we report, and the idioms we employ in describing it, are recruited from the realm of audition.’<sup>304</sup> In turn ritual and religion have found myriad methods of exploiting this sensation of being visited by a presence in sound, and have produced the most elaborate and numinous of sound objects to repeat and sustain these sensations. This is spectacularly evidenced in the pipe organ, which has its humble origin in the cow horn. In the contact of human mouth and animal body when the performer takes the hollowed horn of the animal to her mouth and breathes sound through this bony projection, taken from the animal’s head, what is being amplified? I suggest that for both the performer who is also a listener and the listener who enables the performance,

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid., Tuzin p581

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., Tuzin, p586

the exchange amplifies the phenomenon of being-there, of Dasein, in a way that overcomes the specificity of being. Don Ihde summarises it like this:

Sound permeates and penetrates my bodily being. It is implicated from the highest reaches of my intelligence that embodies itself in language to the most primitive needs of standing upright through the sense of balance that I indirectly know lies in the inner ear. Its bodily involvement comprises the range from soothing pleasure to the point of insanity in the continuum of possible sound in music and noise. Listening begins by being bodily global in its effects.<sup>305</sup>

Sensations of waves of meaningful and abstract sound coursing through the wind instruments featured above, reaching deep in through the ear and through the layers of the body, alter the experience of being embodied. This alteration is so sensational that we are compelled to repeat and reinvent the experience in an endless cycle of navigation and invention of the sonic. Where animals and their bodies have provided the material means of amplifying and distorting human breath and voice through instrumentation, I believe that in the development of the voice itself and specifically the singing human voice and the attendant, internal mechanomorphisms which classical training has demanded are a further facet of the rubric that shapes the resonances of being and becoming.

### **Becoming through singing (Voice as instrument).**

Contemporary trained singers discuss their own voice and singing muscles as ‘a tool to produce sound...a vehicle of power we exert upon the world, trained and disciplined as

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid Ihde, p45

if it were a well-organized machine.’<sup>306</sup> Phenomenologist and classical singer Paivi Jarvio wrestles with the theory of the machining of the body where, in her vocal education, she should consider her body ‘as a thing’ where ‘the singing body consists of lungs, the larynx, and the resonance chambers.’ However, as a living being, she says that when she wakes up;

I am immediately a singing body, whether I begin my day by singing or not. This is my body singing. It is something that experiences itself, supports itself, rejoices in itself. It is flesh that does not consist of atoms or any other divisible parts, but of pleasure and suffering, hunger and thirst, desire and tiredness, power and joy...the flesh is knowing - and knowing is acting. Flesh is an absolute and uninterrupted knowing.<sup>307</sup>

The enthusiasm in Jarvio’s waking awareness is infectious but as her tutors know the process of becoming this singing body involves taking it apart, muscle by muscle, breath by breath and then rebuilding it with discipline, then intelligence, then emotion. This mechanomorphization of a part of the singer’s body places this machine for singing in a strange position of being both inside and outside the body and the person. In classical definitions of what can be considered a musical instrument, the voice was not included in the history of instrumentalization as it is largely respiratory and ‘lacks an external agent’, (unless the hands are used to shape and extend the vocal sound – then perhaps the hand can be considered instrumental).<sup>308</sup> In a reversal of Cartesian machining of the animal body, singers and their academy further mechanized the human throat, larynx, glottis and vocal chords as something newly visible through live video laryngoscopy which allows the singer to view the movement of the vocal folds

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<sup>306</sup>Jarvio, Paivi, ‘The Life and World of a singer: Finding my Way.’ In *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 14, No.1 (2006) p68

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., Jarvio, p69

<sup>308</sup> Lawergren, B. (1988) The origin of musical instruments and sounds. *Anthropos*. 83(1/3) p32

on a monitor as they are singing. The throat interior is at once intensely intimate, being felt vibrating in the body, and visually detached, being viewed on a screen. Jennifer Parker-Starbuck has coined the term 'becoming-animate' to encapsulate phenomena where the performed limits of the human are expanded and 'expose a becoming animate, a condition of sensory attunement - palpable and vibrant - that reveals the interrelationships and traces left between animal, human and machine.'<sup>309</sup> Parker-Starbuck interrogates the mediatized encounter with the animal in performance where, through projection, recorded film and animation, a becoming 'emerges from the inside-out, from within the machine' where we can see it 'for just what it is; an interrelated component of the world we share.'<sup>310</sup> In the study and training of the newly instrumented voice, I suggest that the singer watching her vocal folds on a monitor is prompting a type of becoming-animate which could be included in the 'corporeal intersections with multimedia' performance that are at the focus of Parker-Starbuck's enquiry.<sup>311</sup> I will return to the idea of becomings-animate further along but I mention the theory here to bring the image of the singing machine into the fold of becomings that have influenced this project.

The singing voice that I turn to at this point is that of the classically trained voice which strives to be heard in the immense chamber that is the opera house stage. Opera singers are experts at understanding frequencies and carving sonic space in order to be heard unamplified above the orchestra. They achieve this by controlling and shaping the vocal tract, opening the mouth wide, enlarging the pharynx and lowering the vocal cords (glottis) and so boosting the energy of the frequency using 'loudness' but with

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<sup>309</sup> Parker-Starbuck, J. (2006) Becoming-animate: On the performed limits of "human". *Theatre Journal*. 58(4, Film and Theatre) p650

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., Parker-Starbuck, p651

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

remarkable control. Phillip Ball describes how the effectiveness of their technique can depend on the enunciation of the vowel sounds, which are the principal carriers of vocal energy. Therefore ‘singers have to balance intelligibility – the extent to which a vowel sound can be identified – and audibility, and this explains why, at the very highest frequencies of female soprano singing (2,000 to 3,000 Hz), all vowels tend to sound like an ‘a’ as in ‘ah’” and Ball suggests that this is why operatic singing can sound artificial or at least, unrelated to everyday spoken emotion.<sup>312</sup> However, for the follower of the operatic voice, it is this subversion of rules of language using this machining of the voice that presents a dilemma which resonates with an emotion all of its own. Because of its tendency towards intelligibility and the flourishing of the voice at the expense of the text, the genre of opera has generated a certain amount of philosophical mistrust (Dolar, 30). In sacred music (which preceded and produced the operatic voice), all effort is tied to the text and in service to the word and this is its special achievement. With the operatic voice, the concreteness of the word is pummeled into submission, and I would say, is also liberated into a new world of complexities and tensions that produce Orphic and Dionysian resonances as evidenced by the history of opera from Monteverdi to Birtwhistle. The dilemma of the operatic troubling of voice is precisely summarized by Mladen Dolar in this way:

Expression beyond language is another highly sophisticated language; its acquisition demands a long technical training...(where) singing, by focusing on the voice, actually runs the risk of losing the very thing it tries to worship and revere: it turns it into a fetish object – we could say the highest rampart, the most formidable wall against the voice.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Ball, P. (2011) *The Music Instinct: How Music Works and Why we can't do without it*. London: Vintage Books, p152

<sup>313</sup> Dolar, M. (2006) *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press. p12



This fetishization of singing runs into trouble because, for Dolar, it is an illusion of transcendence, carrying as it does its long history of sacred agency, linking the natural and the divine and promising ‘an elevation above the empirical, the mediated, the limited, worldly human concerns.’<sup>314</sup> Instead, Dolar advises, we should be mindful that it is only through language that voice exists and also that music only exists for speaking beings. We should be wary of imposing on to the voice the character of being the bearer of profound messages, which Dolar says is ‘the core of a fantasy that the singing voice might cure the wound inflicted by culture, restore the loss that we suffered by the assumption of the symbolic order.’<sup>315</sup> This contentious topic is troublesome for musicologists and philosophers and linguists and is the basis for an enormous body of questions and argument of its own. I can appreciate Dolar’s reservations about the vocal fetish and what it does and undoes to language. He is correct that it is, or can be, illusory and misleading and full of false promises. When the voice strays outside the linguistic structure then it joins all the other non-linguistic voices ‘from coughing to babbling, screaming, laughing and singing’ at the zero point of meaning, and the base level of phonology. I would argue however that it is precisely at the zero point of meaning that the singing voice can begin to create a new meaning for itself, develop its own language and include all of the screaming and babbling as the core structure on which it will be built. In what follows I discuss contemporary voices I find to be extraordinarily inventive and voices that might support a bridge between the saying and the screaming, the rational and the animal, in performance.

When Rosi Braidotti looks forward into the post-human future she does not see a meaningful role for tenors and basses and their vocal shifting and shaping of the nature

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., Dolar.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., Dolar, p30-31

of language through the voice. Classical music is ‘flat and banal’ she says and has depended on mimetic staticity, imitating birds and animal sounds which it has completely used up to produce a ‘mockery’ of itself. She has already moved on into a technocultural acoustic world where these new aesthetics ‘undo not only the priority of the human voice in music making, but also the centrality of the human as a sensible means of achieving rhythms and sounds that reflect our era.’<sup>316</sup> For Braidotti, this new era is rich in becoming-animal and specifically becoming-insect aesthetics and revolutions. Post-industrial urban creativity for her, develops in an ‘over-crowded, noisy, highly resonant urban environment where silence and stillness are practically unknown,’ and where music and sound production can then capture this intense sonority without complications of representation.<sup>317</sup> The urban sound of popular music culture and art sound of installations and galleries that Braidotti highlights has the double purpose, she claims, of mapping ‘the acoustic environments of here and now, while undoing the classical function of music as the incarnation of the most sublime ideals of the humanist project.’<sup>318</sup> Instead new music in technoculture rips through time in a nomadic push and pitch of resonances that are often inaudible, imperceptible or overwhelmingly speedy and massively Deleuzian in a swirl of becomings; insect, animal, molecular, electric, territorial and deterritorializing. In Braidotti’s new era, ‘technologically mediated music de-naturalizes and de-humanizes the time-sequence’ of music and deterritorializes ‘our acoustic habits, making us aware that the human is not the ruling principle in the harmony of the spheres.’<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Braidotti, R. (2002) *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Cambridge: Polity, p154

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., Braidotti, p154

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., Braidotti, p157

I would argue that this acoustic environment is certainly finding echoes in the music of urban culture which is thrilling and pushing all of its boundaries all the time but that is *all* that it does; the music of technoculture is an elaborate sound mirror the like of which we have never heard before but it is still a mirror. Braidotti's claim of the dehumanizing of music in technoculture is questionable, I would say, because the human experience is *inevitably* prioritized at the centre of any human cultural expression or even counter-cultural action. Braidotti is further contradictory in her persuasive enthusiasm for the liberated music of technoculture when she cites the work of Diamanda Galas, Laurie Anderson and Meredith Monk, Carmelo Bene as examples of the new order but describes these projects where the 'sheer materiality of the human body and its fleshy contents (lungs, nerves, brains, intestines, etc.) are as many sound-making acoustic chambers...confront(ing) the listener with as shocking a sensation of unfamiliarity as the external rumbles of the cosmos.'<sup>320</sup> I think Braidotti is being selective with the choice of chambers she highlights here as these artists and their peers have built their careers on the virtuosity of their trained voices. Perhaps in the intervening years since the publication of her influential *Metamorphoses*, the novelty of electronic music and sonic insect-becomings that emerged from technoculture has lost some of its bite. The aestheticized urban sound continues to grind and match its environment in seductive and powerful ways that fuel the soundtrack for each fast-developing generation. Indeed the digital revolution has exploded the availability of new music and the outlay of layer upon layer of globalized sampling and mass production of volumes of digital sound has in many ways answered Braidotti's predilection for a de-humanized, de-naturalized acoustic world. But it cannot be called counter-cultural anymore. In my search for the anarchic, the revolutionary and the

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p157

counter-cultural, I turn to the voice outside of technology that contests the very language in which it must narrate its passions. In the contemporary music of singers and performers such as Christian Zehnder and John Tomlinson I find the energy of serious artists who plumb the depths of their own sonic and vocalic body and there find becomings-animal, insects, imperceptible and molecular.

### **Singing and sounding the animal body.**

With Mladen Dolar's serious concerns about the illusory nature of singing in mind, along with its promises of divine access and its fetishization, I turn to artists who seek out something creatural to emerge in their voices that usurps these promises and the anthropocentricity that Braidotti sees ending in our time. Growing up in the Swiss Alps and listening to the cow horn communication of herders across vast tracts of pasture, Christian Zehnder (b.1961) trained his own vocal range to access this cultural memory as well as leaning the skill of the yodel and its pastoral echo in Mongolian throat singing, the doubling of the pitch of the voice producing two pitches at once.<sup>321</sup> His pursuit of a culturally meaningful acoustic envelope resulted in a performance sequence with the wind instrumentalist Balthasar Strieff (b.1963) under the title *Stimmhorn* which they expanded in the late nineties and early two-thousands into a sometimes half-folk, half-jazz clown cabaret or in more serious contexts of monastic settings and spiritual buildings, where the raw depth of the non-verbal throat song consumes the air around it. Strieff's collection of horn instruments, including the alphorn, double alphorn, alpfon (his own invention), büchel, cornet, baroque trumpet, cornetto and tuba along with a collection of herder's cow horns, leave the listener-spectator in little doubt as to the focus of the duo's authentic concerns. Air itself is the

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<sup>321</sup> View Zehnder's throat singing sample here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVzbVvfDVLA> and here; <http://new-space-mountain.ch/en/workshops/voice-research/>. Accessed 12.April.2015.

primary material of their performance and they treat it with a seriousness that forces its material presence to envelop the experience. Inside the virtuosity of the vocal control remain the traces of the cattle herder, the mountain herder and the spatiotemporal environments that generated this remarkable sonic event in the throat. Zehnder has since broadened his three-octave vocal repertoire and practice with collaborations, notably with the Aka people in Central Africa and in 2010 he sang the main part in a new opera by German composer Klaus Schedl (b.1966) titled *Amazonas* based on the diaries of Walter Raleigh. This slide from catacomb to grassland to opera house is also my route to another work that challenges the stereotypical categorization of the trained voice of the classical singer.

In bass singer John Tomlinson's interpretation of *The Minotaur* (2008, 2013), Harrison Birtwhistle's opera for Covent Garden, I hear the 'sublime ideals of the humanist project' that Braidotti found antiquated, being viscerally challenged rather than just abandoned. In turn I believe this opera presents a complex proposal, in scale and originality, which does not simply hold up a mirror to contemporary culture for it to gaze on itself. Instead, in the voice of Tomlinson's bull-man, the edifice of language comes crashing down to Dolar's zero point of meaning and base of phonology in the screaming and babbling of the chorus and the resounding bawl of the bull. In the figure of the Minotaur, the poet and librettist David Harsent created three voices and three conscious states of being for the human-monster. In the first voice we hear the bawl of the bull-man in his labyrinth who cannot speak when awake. His line in the libretto is:

NUAAAAARGH!<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup> Harsent, D. (2008) *The Minotaur* – Libretto. London: Boosey & Hawkes. p23

Only when he is sleeping do we hear his human voice when he questions his multiple personas and his terrible condition:

the beast's hide and horn,

the man's flesh and bone, no telling one from the other...

Except for this lust, all too human

This rage, all too human

This hard heart, all too human...

This inescapable sorrow, all too human.<sup>323</sup>

In these night scenes while dreaming, a third figure appears (projected on a screen) which Harsent and Birtwhistle call Minotaur 2, an interior voice of conscience of the creature which berates the bull-man for his violence to the young Athenians being sacrificed to him in the labyrinth. The Minotaur 2 also behaves like a mirror, reminding him of who and what he is and how he can never be free because of his physical contradiction, a 'half-and-half' where there's 'no telling one from the other.'<sup>324</sup> The Minotaur is a precise figure of ostracism, born in secret to his mother Pasiphae and named Asterios, and committed to live eternally in the labyrinth with no way out and where mirrored walls add to his torture as he is reminded of his difference to the beautiful youths that are flung into his pit. Harsent considers that unlike the other characters of Ariadne and Theseus in the opera, the Minotaur does not change. His predicament is constant until Theseus kills him in the final scene. Harsent has empathy for the monster because:

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid., Harsent, p45

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

He is a tragic figure and, although he does rape and slaughter his victims, it's almost as if he's under an obligation to do so. DNA dictates: that aspect of his nature has taken over. It is duality.<sup>325</sup>

In order to describe this tortured life, Harsent creates this multiplicity of voices that allows Asterios to articulate his abject state. Harsent explains:

I had this notion of continual struggle in him, evidenced by his struggle with speech; 'When I sleep does the man sleep first? When I wake does the beast wake first?' The human part of him wants to have the ability, the virtue, of language and the abilities that language provides to communicate, explain, apologize, justify. All those things he cannot do. So he is left with this inchoate rage.<sup>326</sup>

In these sleep sequences where alone on stage the bull-man triangulates his image and voice through live sound, recorded voice-over and projected images, he is integrated into a becoming-animate. Using Parker-Starbuck's definition, I see how the staged body of the creature becomes 'a site within which the three terms, human, animal, and technology interrelate imaginatively and rehearse some of the ethical, practical, and philosophical possibilities of their integration.'<sup>327</sup> In manifesting Asterios' inchoate rage, Tomlinson wrestles with these becomings-animate that are thrust upon him and tries to find his voice within these multiplicities of persona and physical doublings. The performance of the three voices is a complex orchestration of live, amplified, recorded and (almost) improvised where, in the sleep scenes, heavy with the weight of his massive hypermasculinity which is further enlarged twice in the projection of his body wearing the hairy head of the mythic bull-man. The onstage Asterios wears a kind of

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<sup>325</sup> Sampson, F. (2013) 'The Myth Kitty' – Interview with David Harsent. In *The Minotaur*, Royal Opera House programme, 2013. p42

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., Sampson, p42

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., Parker-Starbuck, p652

cage head complete with horns and through which Tomlinson can be heard and we can sometimes see the ‘man’ inside the ‘bull’. The literalness of the treatment can be critiqued for its stereotypic interpretation of the myth, but we must keep in mind there is no “correct” way to portray a mythic monster. Reading the performance through the concept of becoming-animate however allows for what Parker-Starbuck calls ‘catalysts for reformulations of humanity’s relationship with the non-human.’<sup>328</sup> Inside the struggle to speak, in the throat and body of Asterios, there are multiple becomings at work. Along with the enunciation of the words through the music, which is Tomlinson’s great expertise, he also finds a method of pulling the bellows and bawls of the minotaur away from a banal imitation, or even potential pantomime, and instead he creates a new voice – part human, part animal and part machine, in the instrument of his voice. While the spoken and sung libretto reach around the auditorium in Birtwhistle’s discordant contemporary sound, the bawl of the bull threatens us, sitting passively in our red velvet opera seats because it pushes the limits of our acoustic experience into a new realm of perception and into our receptive bodies. The priority and the risk in the operatic voice, according to Duncan, now ‘hinges of the performativity of voice: its effect rather than its meaning. What is sung is neither representational nor a process tied to cognition as we generally understand it, but a tangible physical effect.’<sup>329</sup> Because of its multiplicity of potential resonances first and its meanings second it is, like many operatic voices, often excessive and suggestive of ‘a slippage to something other or something more than what is first evident, a potential scandal waiting to unfold.’<sup>330</sup> As a counterweight to this massive, excessive bull-man bawl of Asterios, another voice in *The Minotaur* arrives with its own set of legacies,

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., Parker-Starbuck, p663

<sup>329</sup> Ibid, Duncan, p298

<sup>330</sup> Ibid, p296



mechanomorphisms and complex becomings-animal that is worth diverting to here because it is no less brilliant and tragic and mirrors the monstrosity of the beastly man. In the second act, Ariadne visits the temple of the Snake Goddess oracle to make a sacrificial offering of a dove and to hear the oracle's prediction of the fate of Theseus' fight against her brother Asterios in the labyrinth. When Ariadne summons the oracle in this production, a hole in the floor opens and a head appears, then a body rises up, bare breasted, corseted and skirted and soars into a column that towers over Ariadne and the attendant priest. The priest instructs Ariadne to sacrifice the bird, which she does and then she may ask her question. The Snake Goddess speak-sings "in tongues" and in an unintelligible, shrieking falsetto that is excessively theatrical and marvelously "operatic". This shrill voice comes not from a female singer but from the counter-tenor Andrew Watts whose arresting performance of out-stretched arms and epileptic, manic head movements heightens the mad excess of his voice which is not soprano but not not-soprano. Watts is one of a generation of countertenors whose developing voice coincided with a revival of interest in baroque opera, in the early 1990s, and a new trend of casting men in the trouser roles which have been sung by sopranos and mezzos since the demise of the castrato. For Watts in particular a new generation of European composers began to create contemporary operas for his voice while appreciating his daring performance style that has seen him cross-dress, appear naked and deliver commanding interpretations to the most avant-garde compositions in current art-music. The training of the counter-tenor voice is especially difficult because there is so much at stake. Without the right control, the voice can be ruined in every register. Before and after the arrival of the castrato, falsetto male singers sometimes sang women's roles, even though there was no ban on women performing on stage outside the Vatican city. Opera was barely in its infancy when the boy sopranos of the Vatican were the first to

undergo the barbarous act of castration to produce the voice so desired by the church; the purity of the child with the power of the man. The castrato was never a replacement for the female soprano and they rarely played female roles in opera. Composers such as Handel created many male hero roles for the castrato (*Rinaldo*, *Radamisto*, *Ottone*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano*, *Tolomeo*, *Orlando*, *Ariodante*, and *Serse* to name a few). Indeed the castrato voice and body were initially considered more as a super-masculine creation, the *primo uomo*, in the chaotic period of excess and invention of seventeenth century Italy. They were part of a spectacular world where mechanical ingenuity emerged alongside still magical sensibilities. According to Bonnie Gordon, the audience for this new voice which appeared inside a newly mechanized opera house, ‘experienced the castrato as a kind of human machine, a variation among other wondrous objects created by technological attempts to manipulate and supplement natural materials. Castrati were ‘mechanized’ to produce sounds in ways that ‘unmechanized’ bodies could not....then operas and spectacles used the castrato as both machine and malleable object.’<sup>331</sup> For Gordon, the castrato becomes a cyborgean figure and the glory of the age. This celebrity status, which is well documented (Fernandez, 1976; Barbier, 2010) was short lived however and the tragic narrative of the castrato voice spans the trajectory from angel to monster in less than two centuries (Poizat, 1992; Koestenbaum, 2001). This descent into ostracism and abject debasement comes not because of a change in attitude to the act of castration but with a shift in appreciation for the timbre of the castrato voice along with a rejection of their unusual social status and their physical alterity. By the 1780s denunciations of castrati had become ‘de rigeur’ as Martha Feldman explains:

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<sup>331</sup> Gordon, B., (2011) The castrato meets the cyborg. *The Opera Quarterly*. 27(1) p95

To denounce castrati was to utter a liberal cry to preserve Nature by condemning any cruel perversions that might threaten to disfigure Her, where Nature was a new Enlightenment divinity that had to be protected from threats of disfiguration and where safeguarding her was a matter of social, political and metaphysical principle. ...castrati had become irreversible signs of things out of place, they were categorically wrong – men by origin but nonmen or half-men in the social sphere and psyche<sup>332</sup>

As half-men and non-men it was a short slide into the pit of animal caricature, infection, unnaturalness, social depravity and ostracism where ‘those who are afflicted with this disease are so apt to whinny like colts, croak like frogs, bellow like bulls, roar like lions, squeak like pigs and most commonly bray like asses.’<sup>333</sup> The voice of the castrato was so abhorrent and filthy it could take the form of a disease-carrying insect such as the fly which ‘slides through the ear and gets into the pineal gland where “it dries out the ethereal spirit, which is the essence of the soul, and produces...a total alienation of mind.”’<sup>334</sup> These tragic performers became ‘imbruted’ in a campaign fueled by suspicion of their sexuality, and jealousy of their finance, social status, access to royalty and luxury life style and the very condition of what is was to be called

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<sup>332</sup> Feldman, M.,(2008) Denaturing the castrato. *The Opera Quarterly*. 24(3-4) p178, 192

<sup>333</sup> ‘*The Remarkable Trial of the Queen of Quavers and Her Associates, for Sorcery, Witchcraft, and Enchantments at the Assizes Held in the Moon, for The County of Gelding before the Rt. Hon. Sir Francis Lash, Lord Chief Baron of the Lunar Exchequer* ([London:] Printed for J. Bew, [1777]), quotes from 5–7.’ Cited in Feldman, (2008), p183-184. In the *Trial* the prosecutor for the Crown describes the offensive castrati in this catalogue of zoomorphic insults which I think is worth noting here: ‘It is in consequence of this amazing depravity of taste that seven exotic animals *yclep’d* castrati were lately imported from the Continent, at such a most enormous expense. - Such filthy lumps of mortality as the wilds of Africa never produced! - They have the look of a crocodile, the grin of an ape, the legs of a peacock, the paunch of a cow, the shape of an elephant, the brains of a goose, the throat of a pig, and the tail of a mouse: to crown the whole, if you sit but a few moments in their company, you will be sure of having your nostrils perfumed in a strange manner; for they have continually about them the odoriferous effluvia of onion and garlic...Indeed it is not possible to conceive a more nauseous and odious creature than a Castrato.’ *Remarkable Trail* 7-8. (in Feldman, 2008, 184)

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, Feldman, p183

human.<sup>335</sup> It is important to remember in any discussion of the celebrity of the castrati that success was the privilege of a tiny minority. In the early 1700s an estimated four thousand boys from southern Italy were castrated every year by their families in the hope that they might earn a living in the church choir or on the stage (Pleasants, 1966). The contemporary repulsion to the practice of genital mutilation places the castrati always as victims. But it is worth noting that many types of human and animal bodies were mutilated, trafficked and traded in this period and within this trade came the practice of castration came to Europe through Spain where Moorish eunuchs were created to be court singers in a centuries-old practice. Traditions betray bodies however and when the fashion for listening to the castrati dwindled their voices became inaudible and their bodies became unacceptable. Castrati in general suffered many ailments because of their alteration, which contorted their physical development as well as their voices. They were invariably barrel chested, unusually tall and ungainly, overweight, arthritic and easily recognizable visually and vocally. Few lived beyond the age of forty. In Deleuze and Guattari's description of the counter tenor and castrato voice, they visualize this machined and manipulated body with graphic detail where, quoting Fernandez, they say that this voice 'operates inside the sinuses and at the back of the throat and the palate without relying on the diaphragm or passing through the bronchial tubes;...the stomach voice of the castrati, (is) "stronger, more voluminous, more languid" as if they gave carnal matter to the imperceptible, impalpable, and ariel.'<sup>336</sup> In the machining of the castrato voice, the carnality and spectacularity of the body pulls the flesh around the organ of speech and song hiding its mysteries and sustaining its uncanny acousmatic power.

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2004) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, p334 They are quoting Fernandez here from *Proporino* (1976).

When the Snake Priestess emerges from a hole in the stage in *The Minotaur*, she/he resurrects in his/her voice the figure of the castrato/counter tenor and the mysteries of the throat and other hidden organs are unavoidably fascinating when this voice is echoing the castrato body and its brutal history. Standing twenty feet tall in a bizarre trance, her breasts exposed like the Minoan sculptures of the goddesses of Knossos, the Snake Priestess addresses the theatre with great seriousness and passion though her song remains unintelligible:

SO LO THO. SO LO THO. SO LO THOO.

SO. THO SO NO. SO NO THO.

KEH KEH. MO MO MO THO. ESSS. AE AUK.

NEON NOMEN CONET CONET. UPTEN FILIAT.

OTEN KO NE MO.<sup>337</sup>

Her language is a pidgeon babble, which the attendant priest translates for Ariadne. It is the Snake priestess who gives Ariadne the ball of red rope (in which ‘there is always sonority’)<sup>338</sup> that will lead Theseus in and out of the labyrinth. The electric performance by Watts revives something of the history and danger of this artificial or contrived voice precisely because of the babble language. We are confronted directly and exclusively with the material and carnal dimension of this voice which only pays a lip-service to the conventions of language, gender and species.

After the young Athenian Innocents have been mauled by the Minotaur and left for dead, Birtwhistle and Harsent complete their collection of the monstrous voices of the opera with the blooded figure of the Ker. The Keres are half human, half-scavenging-

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<sup>337</sup> Birtwhistle, (2008) *The Minotaur*. Scene Ten: the Oracle at Psychro. My translation.

<sup>338</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, “There is always sonority in Ariadne’s thread. Or the song of Orpheus.” p343

bird women who have access to both spoken language and their own screeching vocabulary of terror:

‘Ruuuuuuuak! Ruuuuuuak! Ruuuuuuak!’<sup>339</sup>

Their world is also driven by abject desires and an insatiable hunger for fresh kill. Like their buzzard cousins, they perform an important function in the drama where at the end of each act they clean up after the disasters of the human politic and pick clean the victims of corrupt power and random death:

Bloodshed fetches us. Slaughter fetches us.

We darkened the sky at Thermopolae.

At Marathon, at Ephesus, at Syracuse

We fell like black rain.<sup>340</sup>

When the Minotaur collapses almost dead in the last scene of the opera he finds his human voice just long enough to surmise that ‘Between beast and man, Next - to - nothing.’<sup>341</sup> But the last word goes to the Ker who arrives to feed on his massive corpse when she screams ‘Ruuuuuuuuuark!’<sup>342</sup> and then the *opera*, the work of the drama is finished.

The idea of language holding inside itself a more primitive locution is a developing concept in Birtwhistle’s oeuvre beginning with *The Mask of Orpheus* (1986) and expanded in the man-creature-myth dilemmas in *The Second Mrs Kong* (1994). When we reach the labyrinth in *The Minotaur* the line of flight for this composer is his arrival into the psychodrama of the caged man-beast who has never seen the outside world, except in dreams. The labyrinth becomes the chamber for re-sounding the rehearsed

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., Harsent, *Minotaur, Libretto*, p39

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., Harsent, p37

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. p65

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

human-animal voices that Birtwhistle had been collecting en route to the events at Crete. Inside this structure the rules of language do not apply and so the trio of monsters – human buzzard, male priestess, and bull-man – find their voices and devour the air of the opera house. The labyrinth becomes a macrocosm of the human/animal interior of both the heart and the ear. The underground cavity of chambers becomes ‘a place with more dead ends, more flaws and fault lines than the human heart.’<sup>343</sup> Inside the physical and metaphorical labyrinth is the place to ‘let the creature live. Let it live *there*.’<sup>344</sup> The central pumping chambers of the body become the living space for the human-animal monster infant. The Minotaur merges his internal and external worlds of the monstrous body half-lost in a psychic mega-prison in this passage:

In this place of despair, this place of silent weeping,  
this place of sorrow, of fear, of cries and whispers,  
this place of hellish visions, of *no way out*,  
I am mobbed by shadows, I’m lost inside myself.<sup>345</sup>

The labyrinth is therefore a rhizomatic structure where dimensions confound directions and routes create more routes in an eternal series of openings and enfoldings, as a place of contagion, as a miasma. Living somewhere in this underground air is the voice and its echos – human, animal, architectural, carnal.

When Deleuze describes the labyrinth as a becoming, or as a metastructural manifestation of being and becoming, he does so in the shade of Nietzsche’s elaborate use of labyrinthine metaphors. But in *The Fold*, Deleuze stretches the materiality of labyrinth into the plastic, fluid, and elastic dynamics of matter inside the human body and mind where:

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid Harsent, p47

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid, p46, italics added.

A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold...A labyrinth is said, etymologically, to be multiple because it contains many folds. The multiple is not only what has many parts but also what is folded in many ways. A labyrinth corresponds exactly to each level: the continuous labyrinth in matter and its parts, the labyrinth of freedom and its predicates.<sup>346</sup>

The labyrinth is a place of deep resonance of memory for Deleuze, where meaning and matter collide in an eternal, repeating layering of experience folding over itself without end. Deleuze's labyrinth of the soul is therefore a counter-Cartesian proposal where he puts forward a method of thinking that lacks a rectilinear structure, and instead accepts a flexible multiplicity of open structures that fold and enfold into an eternal becoming. If Descartes did not discover a route through the labyrinth of the soul, it was because he thought in straight lines. Deleuze explains that Descartes 'knew the inclension of the soul as little as he did the curvature of matter.' Instead, Deleuze suggests we need a cryptographer, 'someone who can at once account for nature and decipher the soul, who can peer into the crannies of matter and read into the folds of the soul...the souls down below, sensitive, animal.'<sup>347</sup>

In the labyrinth, the literal and the metaphorical resonances that can exist and emerge from its rhizomatic structure are less problematic for Deleuze and Guattari than the concept of resonance by itself. Simon Bayly describes how Deleuze and Guattari see resonance as 'plagued by its own metaphorical depths, a black hole of an idea in which the plurality of "rendering sonorous" is homogenized into a reverberant but

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<sup>346</sup> Deleuze, G., (2006) *The Fold*, London: Continuum, p3.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.



meaningless bathos.’<sup>348</sup> Without a structure around its resonance it is prone to expand uncontrollably without form. Instead, in the concept of resonant cavities like the labyrinth, sonorous communication can begin to respond to the structure and be shaped by its densities and dimensions. Without the structure - labyrinth, wormhole, earhole, mouth-hole, theatre - resonance cannot be understood, or even heard. In Michelle Duncan’s imaging, ‘Vocal resonance seeps through porous bodies, remaining as haunting memories, haunting melodies.’<sup>349</sup> Receptive interior spaces reinforce and prolong the vibrations and waves of communicative sounds where they can be absorbed by other bodies, tissues, and cavities.

In the theatre, resonance has a particularly special role where the sound of the speaking body and the singing body needs a host body, another receiver to reverberate in and through. In the willing spectatorial body, in the acoustic architectural body of the building, in the bodies of musical instruments, the vocalic body can re-sound its materiality of lungs, muscles and larynx in an ecology of singing and listening. Substances are made air-borne in the machine of the theatre, which is not merely functioning as a place of exchange of communication. Bodies encounter each other in a layered, multidimensional, shared air, in a becoming-resonant of both singer and listener where something of each is reverberating in the other. Bayly suggests that: ‘An encounter with resonance is always uncanny, whether in the strange mutations wrought on sound by certain architectural or natural stone formations or in the buzzing felt in the filled cavities of one’s teeth caused by a certain pitch and volume of voice’<sup>350</sup> In becoming-resonant the body is both a complex producer of sound and also a complex

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<sup>348</sup> Bayly, S. (2011) *A Pathognomy of Performance*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p147

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., Duncan, (2004) *The operatic scandal* p304

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., Bayly,, p153

receiver, 'an organ, a body and an entire sensibility capable of being affected by vibrations of the air.'<sup>351</sup> Just as the singer Jarvio is taught to think of her body as 'a large flute through which air flows, giving life to the flute' we can experience the exchange of sonic, sung air as the occasion when 'the whole body opens into a living instrument, into a hollow pipe, through which the breath flows up and down, to and fro'<sup>352</sup> and through which is communicated the labyrinthine cavities of the lungs, their sighing and strength, inducing a shared understanding of what it means to be alive, to be an acoustic creature. In the theatre and the opera house voices do not just go in one ear and out the other. In becoming-resonant, traces of the reverberations of the singing voice are held in the listening body as remnants, or like Rebecca Schneider's 'performance remains' of the exchange, 'like a corporeal unconscious' where 'the voice that emanates from this body is one that carries remnants of the body with it, remnants of that gain, through propulsion, a weight of their own.'<sup>353</sup> In the long history of exchanging air, matter and mind in multi-spatial performance practices, it is the creatural acoustic that asserts itself, in the voice of the living by putting itself into circulation to be listened to again and again, to be re-sounded and carried in and through the resonant cavities of the sounder and the receiver. Within these haunting acoustics, the animal voice and body reverberates, inducing an eternal becoming-resonant long after the heavily embroidered curtain draws the performance to a close.

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., Bayly, p159

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., Jarvio, p69

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., Duncan, p303

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